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## ОПЕРАЦИЯ «ГРОЗА»



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"Storm". Bloody games of dictators

## Foreword

Of the 54 years of life that fate let Lenin go, for 47 years he did not have the opportunity to translate his crazy ideas into reality, but he expressed them quite frankly. "It is necessary," the leader of the world proletariat repeatedly broadcast, "that the peoples know those secret springs that give rise to wars." He himself made no secrets of anything.

Seized by the mania of power over the world, the leader believed that he would achieve world domination through the so-called "World Revolution", the theoretician and practitioner of which he considered himself.

Although, according to Lenin, "the Bolsheviks do not have a fatherland," he himself, being a Russian person, or at least a Russian subject, had time to get to know his native Fatherland well before he rose to the ghostly heights of internationalism.

Born at the height of the Five Hundred Years' War, he was drawn into this war almost from his high school years, lost his brother in it, ended up in prison and was thrown out by the maelstrom of this war abroad for many years of emigre vegetation.

He had enough time to look from France, Austria and Switzerland to try to understand Russia and its people.

Analyzing this situation, the great leader of the Bolsheviks wrote thousands of pages and shouted out millions of words, but living in an illusory world - the refuge of all schizophrenics, he did not understand anything and, as always, ruined his own business with absolutely wrong conclusions.

That aggressive field that hovered over Russia throughout its fixed history was generated by the ongoing war between the people and the government, and the driving force of this field has always been directed inland. Only very experienced and cynical rulers managed to use this aggressive field in external wars, but it always - like a wriggling red-hot ribbon - tried to escape from the control of the authorities and strike

by them themselves.

Ivan the Terrible's attempt to direct the accumulated aggression of the tortured people outwards led to the All-Russian turmoil, which almost destroyed the Muscovite kingdom.

This kingdom was destroyed by Peter the Great, who was the first to really use the accumulated aggressive energy in a foreign war and win back 22 years, accompanying military campaigns with unprecedented terror inside the country. Moreover, the great reformer compiled something like a methodology for the future rulers of Russia, where, along with merciless terror inside the country, he proposed using the aggressive field of the people, directed against the government, as an inexhaustible source of energy, with which you can quickly capture all of Europe and Asia up to the "southern seas". To do this, it was necessary to beat the drum without a break and have a ferocious secret police. Why all this is necessary - Peter could not formulate or did not want to.

He could not admit that all this is necessary only in order to sit on the throne. His successors could not or did not know how to use Peter's methods, and therefore a series of coups d'etat took place in Russian history through the entire 18th century and smoothly flowed into the endless Napoleonic wars.

Lenin considered himself smarter than Peter I. Having come to power and considering unfortunate Russia as the "Depot of the World Revolution", he immediately declared this very "revolution" his main goal, hoping with its help to turn the potential of hatred and aggressiveness accumulated over the centuries to the outside.

"It's time to probe Europe with a bayonet! - joyfully burred, proclaimed the leader of the world proletariat. "Long live the world revolution!"

"We will blow up the world fire on the mountain to all bourgeois, the world fire in the blood ..."

And the secret police was immediately created, in comparison with which even the Secret Office of Peter I can be considered a church orphanage. Even Peter himself would have been horrified by the terror that was used in the country by the adherents of the "world revolution". It was already about the complete, total extermination of social classes in a wide range: from the bourgeoisie to the kulaks. The legal incorrectness of the terminology made it possible to kill anyone, because someone who could not be called a fist, could be called a fist. And anyone - an accomplice of the world bourgeoisie.

But it was not there!

Lenin, who believed that any cook could govern the state, he himself could govern such a state as Russia, turned out to be completely incapable. He was far from Peter the Great. The very first attempt to create "iron proletarian battalions", which, according to the leader's plan, were to raise the "Red Banner of Labor" over the planet, led to the most severe civil war, riots, rebellions and uprisings, when everyone, with bitter hatred, began to exterminate each other in the best traditions of the Five Hundred Years' War. Lenin, like any maniac, apparently fancied himself immortal, but they don't live long at the heights of Russian power, and at the age of 52, the leader of the world proletariat had his first stroke, from which he never recovered, eventually living only a year more than he had lived for Peter the Great.

Dying, the leader left to his followers so many false truths, elevated by his disciples to the rank of objective laws, that one should not be surprised at the terrible seventy-year march of our country from one catastrophe to another until the very collapse.

Stalin made truly titanic efforts, trying to direct the energy of the Five Hundred Years' War outward, but every time he seemed to succeed, the energy of the terrible field escaped from his hands, bringing down another crushing blow to himself and the whole country.

The country was crippled by internal political crises in a crimson nightmare of self-destruction. The sixth part of the land resembled a huge overdue abscess, ready to burst and flood all mankind on the planet with pus. Treason, conspiracies, total sabotage, mass extermination of the people, whirlpools of deadly intrigues, unprecedented militarization of society and the economy; The psychology of the "defenders" of the fortress besieged and blocked by the capitalist encirclement, implanted by the ideologists of the regime, all this constantly led to bloody dead ends, leaving the only way out - a big external war.

Lenin dreamed of such a war, and Stalin did everything to make it a reality, despite the fact that a terrible socio-political abscess was brewing on the body,

having burst, threatened, according to the canons of the Five Hundred Years' War, to drown both himself and the regime he had created in pus.

Fortunately for the Leader of All Nations, the abscess turned out to be pierced by a German bayonet, and although this meant another national catastrophe for the country, the vector of the aggressive energy of the people turned outward for the second time since 1812, giving Comrade Stalin the opportunity to take a breath and even become a generalissimo, and along the way destroy another 27 million fellow citizens.

It is unlikely that Stalin would have been able to achieve great results if, obeying the instinct of self-preservation, he had carried out the Thunderstorm operation developed under his leadership - a blow to the rear of the German troops after they landed on the British Isles, followed by a victorious march through "liberated Europe".

Moreover, it is still unknown whether the then Red Army, torn apart by the Five Hundred Years' War, would have been able to cope with the task, despite the overwhelming advantage in manpower and equipment over a potential enemy.

Life decreed in favor of Stalin and the regime he headed. The people managed to turn the aggressive energy accumulated over 500 years against an external enemy, and with the monstrous numbers of losses suffered, they managed to keep the vector of hatred in the right direction for many years, for more than half a century continuously rattling the war drums in order to constantly remind of the openly provoked and criminal mediocrity war waged (which Stalin ordered to be called the Great Patriotic War), in the hope that it would extinguish the fire of the Five Hundred Years with oceans of spilled blood. But this was not done, and the Five Hundred Years' War crushed the Soviet Union with even greater ease than before it destroyed Moscow Rus' and the Russian Empire, and it is possible that with the next blow it will crush the Russian Federation as well. Both world wars for the Five Hundred Years were only - albeit significant - but episodes.

## Introduction

The idea of world domination is as old as time. The desire to achieve military, political and economic hegemony over the world arose in more than one violent head during the not so long history of our civilization. Alexander and Caesar, caliphs and Napoleon - this is not a complete list of those who tried to theoretically substantiate and practically implement the alluring idea of world domination.

Let's move straight to the 20th century, when powerful empires, which, it would seem, only had to make a tiny effort before achieving full world hegemony, burst and collapsed from an excess of imperial ambitions.

Russia collapsed first. It was a shame that it fell apart - on the eve of a carefully planned, well-prepared, coordinated with the allies military campaign, which, by all indications, was supposed to bring the war to a victorious end. But the thousand-year-old empire of military tension could not stand it and collapsed at the very moment when it considered itself stronger than ever.

The second collapsed Germany. German troops were stationed in the West, a hundred miles from Paris, and in the East, a hundred miles from St. Petersburg, occupying vast expanses of European Russia and a good half of France. But the hard noose of the English blockade caught my throat.

Then, with a bang and a roar, the ancient Habsburg empire disintegrated. Behind it collapsed the majestic Ottoman Empire - the Brilliant Porta - with difficulty holding the precious straits in the weakening hands. For centuries, the Habsburgs and sultans fought each other in countless wars, and collapsed together, once again in a military alliance.

But the English Empire survived, and not only survived, but, at first glance, became even more powerful, adding to itself the vast colonial possessions taken from the Germans and Turks. Wild envy, quickly growing into a terrible hatred, suppressed all other feelings for England on the part of the affected powers.

Spat upon and humiliated lay defeated Germany, having lost not only Alsace and Lorraine, but also the Ruhr region. All the colonies were taken from her, and moreover, in order to completely humiliate the defeated enemy, the British, as one of the conditions for surrender, demand and achieve the surrender to them in full strength of the pride of Germany - its fleet of the high seas - a fleet that, if not won the battle of Jutland with the monstrous The Grand Fleet of the British, then, in any case, gave the British a reason to reflect on their invincibility at sea.

Hysteria of humiliation sweeps through crushed Germany. In a Bavarian hospital, sobbing against the iron bars of a soldier's bed, the gassed corporal of the first company of the 16th Bavarian infantry regiment, Adolf Hitler, who was twice wounded in battles with the British on Ypres and the Somme, was awarded two Iron Crosses for courage.

Although it has not yet been definitively established for what Hitler received his awards, the mere case of awarding a private of the Kaiser's army for one war with two Iron Crosses II and I class is unique and suggests a very significant feat.

The war threw Germany into the dustbin of history. The once brilliant Deutschemark has turned to dust. Factories stopped, millions of unemployed and beggars, terrible social tensions, the payment of war reparations, famine, riots, the polarization of society around extremely radical parties, empty store shelves - can all this be compared with a country prospering just four years ago? There is no work, and there is no incentive to work, so people spend all their time at rallies, where the newly-minted "people's leaders" offer their recipes for leading Germany out of the deepest political and economic crisis.

But what kind of news comes from the east - from Russia? Some international gang of adventurers has seized power there and openly proclaims the idea of world domination, served under the sauce of "world proletarian revolution". Their agents are already disturbing Germany. But... How magnificent is the idea that came from Russia to create a party state on the basis of an ideological party. A party bound by iron discipline, conspiratorial like the Jesuit order, led by an iron leader who relies on a merciless punitive apparatus subordinate to him. How wonderful the idea of outlawing certain groups of the population in the name of consolidation around the party and the awe of the rest!

Russia... She was disintegrating before our eyes. The multi-million army fled to their homes. In the chaos of the rapid whirlpool of all-destroying anarchy, the royal throne disappeared - as it was not. Poland, Ukraine, the Baltic states, Finland, the republics of Transcaucasia, the khanates and emirates of Central Asia declared their independence. Half of Siberia broke away from the empire. All Cossack territories from the Don to the Ussuri announced their unwillingness to deal with Moscow.

However, a group of fanatics and adventurers did not lose their heads at the sight of a terrible collapse. Moreover, with incredible courage, bordering, as it seemed to many, on suicidal recklessness, the Bolsheviks declared their goal "world

revolution", "the creation of a world proletarian government" with the total physical destruction of all "who are not with us".

Russia was declared the "depot of the world revolution". The whole world shuddered at the slogan of the destruction of the bourgeoisie as a class without any clear formulation of who should be considered a bourgeois. Yes, anyone! The system of war communism was involved in the country, in comparison with which even the pure socialism of Plato could seem like a biblical Eden.

Palaces are burning, ancient temples are blown up, national values are being stolen, national shrines and traditions are being trampled into mud and blood, the color of the nation is fleeing from the distraught country, the rest are turning into hostages, waiting for the executioner's bullets every minute.

The entire population of the country becomes hostages. In secret directives and instructions, the words "Complete, wholesale extermination ..." are almost becoming a cliché. The fire of the civil war is still raging, and the red horsemen are already eager to "probe" neighboring Poland.

The crushing rout near Warsaw, which almost coincided in time with the thunder of the twelve-inch guns of Kronstadt, finally makes the Bolshevik fanatics wake up from the frenzy of battle. For the first time since 1917, a candidate for the leadership of the world proletariat looks around in fear.

Blooming only seven years ago, the Russian Empire lies in smoking, bloody ruins. Not only the young Russian industry was destroyed, but also the ancient Russian bread. An army of "warriors-internationalists", made up of former German and Austrian prisoners of war, Latvians, Chinese and Jews, is rolling around the country like a steamroller, destroying the "petty-bourgeois elements" - that is, peasants who do not want to turn into serfs again. The peasants respond with mass uprisings. They are jammed with artillery, doused with mustard gas, strangled with war gases. For several years now no one sows and plows. A famine unseen since the Time of Troubles strikes a dying country.

Railways were destroyed, the military and merchant fleet were almost completely destroyed. Foreign trade, as well as domestic, is reduced to zero. The hard Russian ruble - the pride of Russian economists - simply evaporated. Commodity-money relations are terminated. The once majestic Orthodox Church is silent and does not even pray. A broken and crucified country lies in blood. She will rise again, but it will no longer be Russia, but something terrible.

Perhaps this is how it was intended, but the great leader of the world proletariat, somewhat confused and disappointed because none of his prophecies came true, is out of the game, struck by a stroke. And soon he dies, dictating his famous last letters to stenographers before his death, from which it follows that the only way out of the deadly impasse into which he has led the country is to return back to European-type capitalism.

Then why was everything done?.. But what about world domination, the idea of which had already captured his students? What to do with the Comintern?

A small pockmarked man with a black mustache in a semi-military tunic and breeches tucked into high boots, standing over the coffin of Lenin, takes an oath to continue the work of the great leader. "We swear to you, Comrade Lenin..."

His appearance contrasts with the appearance of other associates of the late leader, dressed in three-piece suits and ties. After all, Lenin himself constantly dressed like this, and the leader's lifestyle is the lifestyle of the era! Gleaming glasses of pince-nez, barely hiding their smiles, they listen to how with a strong Caucasian accent, the pockmarked mustachioed man reads his oath. "We swear



to you, Comrade Lenin...

Lenin did not like him for his rudeness and lack of education, and they - his comrades-in-arms and students - simply despised this "half-educated seminarian" - with criminal manners, combined with the capriciousness of a movie star and the vindictiveness of a wild mountaineer. They temporarily pushed him forward at Lenin's deathbed in order to continue squabbling over Lenin's ideological legacy behind his sham back... But their time has already passed. They will shout a little more about the "world proletariat" and about the "imminent collapse of capitalism", and then everyone will get their own bullet in the back of the head.

Joseph Stalin - the son of a shoemaker from the Georgian town of Gori - reduced all his pre-revolutionary activities to the so-called "practical Marxism", organizing bandit attacks on banks, collectors, mail trains and even steamships in order to provide money to those who live in emigration and who are not able to earn a penny with their labor leaders of the "proletarian" revolution.

In between "exes", as Vladimir Ilyich called his activities, Iosif Dzhugashvili was in prison or in exile, communicating with professional criminals, police provocateurs and lumpens of all kinds. He did not hone his oratorical skills and intellect in the Swiss-Danish-Swedish cafeterias in disputes with the degrading European social democracy.

Stalin saw Lenin's terrible confusion after the suppression of the revolution in Hungary and after the Kronstadt rebellion. He saw with what cowardly haste the leader gave the signal for a general retreat, called the NEP, hypocritically refusing everything that he passionately talked about a few days ago, in particular, from the basis of the foundations of his teaching - the achievement of world domination through the world proletarian revolution.

Several times Lenin reassured his comrades that next week he would begin to finish off the NEP, and they sharpened their knives, but at the next party conference they heard from the leader that "NEP is serious and for a long time!"

Such unprincipled maneuvering, these shirks - now to the right, now to the left, irritated and showed that it seems that the leader no longer corresponds to his high mission. It was then that Ilyich had his first stroke, which very quickly led to a search in his personal Kremlin office, and then to death ...

Socialism cannot be built, Lenin repeatedly emphasized, without putting an end to the "petty-bourgeois element," that is, in human language, to the independence of the peasants.

Stalin puts forward the slogan about "building socialism in one single country", while referring again to Lenin, who just always argued the opposite.

From such a heretical interpretation of the great doctrine, from the incredible impudence with which the new slogan was presented, which determined the general line of the party, the breath of the entire "old Bolshevik guard" was taken away. But Stalin knew what he was doing.

The exhausted people were deaf to the slogans of world domination. Ten years of wars, unprecedented in their fierceness, not only changed the soul of the people, their anthropological type also changed. The people mutated into something completely different from anything. The old, humane Russian intelligentsia has almost completely disappeared. The famous Russian industrial proletariat was completely exterminated and disappeared from the face of the earth, and the collectivization that hit the countryside forced the peasants expelled from the land to go to the factories and construction sites of the first five-year plan, giving the authorities human material for any kind of processing. The campaign against the kulaks, which destroyed 15 million people, as Stalin foresaw,

consolidated the society, if what existed in the country can be called a society. All this is well known, but somehow receded into the background, that in the volleys and blood of the "second civil war," as Stalin himself called collectivization, processes took place that escaped the attention of the then world and current historians. And the following happened: an army unprecedented in scale and technical equipment was created and deployed. The work of militarization of the country, carried out by Stalin from the moment he concentrated in his hands all the fullness of state and party power in 1934, staggers the imagination as one of the wonders of the world.

In fact, let us recall that the basis of the population of the USSR in the early and mid-30s was the multi-million mass of the peasantry, who saw in their life only two mechanisms - an ax and a plow. This mass could easily, of course, be mobilized, put on a horse, taught to shoot a rifle or turn the steering wheel of a warship. But something else was needed. It was necessary, firstly, to create personnel for the air force. Not elite cadres of pilots of the First World War from hussars, cavalry guards and naval officers, but hundreds of thousands of pilots, navigators, radio operators, aircraft engineers, technicians, repairmen, gunsmiths. It was necessary to create highly qualified personnel in the aviation industry. And to create all this from the wild and primitive peasant masses.

And this is not even the main thing - but the fact that all this was created in less than five years!

But that's just aviation. And the tanks? Tens of thousands of tanks required more than one hundred thousand specialists in a wide variety of fields. And they all appeared in five years! But they all still needed to be taught to read and write before that!

Next is the fleet! The most complex type of armed forces, requiring powerful technical knowledge from the personnel. More than two hundred submarines—more than all the maritime powers combined—were built between 1933 and 1940, and each boat had two trained crews.

What an incredible gigantic work has been done! Let us recall that if by some miracle a few tsarist generals and colonels survived at the top, then there was no one left at the middle and lower levels of military administration - all lieutenants, captains, captains were killed to a single person or fled abroad. There was nothing left of the old heritage - everything was created anew.

The footage of the civil war was not suitable for a modern army either. Firstly, because they were completely illiterate, and secondly, and most importantly, they were created by Trotsky and, not without reason, were considered Trotskyist. And therefore they were treated no less harshly than with the former tsarist officers: they were all ruthlessly liquidated.

Why was an unimaginably huge army created with such haste, hundreds of times exceeding all the limits of necessary state defense, if even Stalin himself in his numerous speeches noted the growing pacifism in Europe, torn by contradictions, shaken by crises and practically unarmed? Recall the numbers: the army of France - 300 thousand, including colonial formations; Reichswehr - 150 thousand and not a single tank, not even an armored car; USA - 140 thousand and a company (experimental) of armored vehicles; England - 90 thousand, scattered throughout the empire; USSR - 2.5 million and already four fully equipped tank corps.

At the tankodromes near Kazan, together with the secretly arrived officers of the Reichswehr, the tactics of tank wedges are being worked out. Thirsty for revenge, the Germans are a natural ally in the future campaign.

A huge multi-million army is preparing for a "furious campaign". A thunderous roar is heard from millions of throats: "Long live the great Stalin!"



While Stalin was torn apart by internal contradictions and inferiority complexes, constantly forcing him to "check his life according to Lenin", the former corporal of the first company of the 16th Bavarian infantry regiment became the chancellor of Germany as the Fuhrer (leader) of the party that won the elections to the Reichstag.

The National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) organized by him, enriched by the experience of the sixteen-year existence of a party state in the East, came to power in a much more organized way than in Russia, clearly not wanting to plunge their country into Russian chaos. The party punitive apparatus was already ready, but the old one was not destroyed, but peacefully connected with the new one.

Having come to power under the slogan of the revival of Germany and the complete rejection of the articles of the Versailles Treaty, which Churchill himself once called "idiotic", Adolf Hitler also chose a victim to consolidate around himself the entire German people, but not the bourgeoisie or peasants, like his teachers in the East (Hitler considered these measures to be fundamentally erroneous), and the Jews of Germany, whom he first declared outlaws by a special act. The Nazi anti-Jewish campaign was simply copied from the anti-kulak campaign in the USSR, with the only difference being that anyone in the USSR could be declared a kulak or a kulakist, while in Germany everything was immediately put into order so as not to give free rein to the base instincts of the population - here it's either you are a Jew, or not a Jew - how lucky to be born.

It should be noted that Stalin, to put it mildly, could not stand the Jews, but was afraid, knowing perfectly well the old criminal, who had been stewing in the Russian revolutionary underground for so many years, that it was not safe to get involved with such a formidable opponent.

Hitler, being as poorly educated as Stalin, did not, however, have the rich life experience and oriental cunning of Joseph Vissarionovich. No one warned him against such a reckless, largely provoked step.

Unlike Stalin, Hitler did not suffer from complexes and indecision. He liked to take risks and did not spend much time thinking about his foreign policy moves. Not having time to take the chancellor's chair, he immediately unilaterally denounced the Treaty of Versailles and ordered his troops to occupy the Ruhr region. The Kremlin was on guard. Here it begins. But dormant on the laurels of the winner of the last war, France, decomposed by the socialists, limited itself to a sluggish protest, and in England, "His Majesty's Government" expressed "concern and regret" about this.

The pipes of the Ruhr began to smoke again, the stopped heart of Germany beat "in a joyful rhythm", dissolving unemployment and other insoluble problems of the Weimar Republic. Hitler officially announced the German rearmament program without any restrictions.

Gaining strength, the Wehrmacht is marching across the country. Pilots and tank crews who have had extensive experience in Lipetsk and Kazan are quickly putting rearmament programs on a grand scale. From millions of throats, a thunderous, jubilant cry is heard: "Heil, Hitler!" Lead us, leader! Anschluss of Austria. The alarmed Entente countries are trying to agree on a new union.

So, in the two largest countries of Europe, on the wave of humiliation and the collapse of imperial ambitions during the First World War, two monstrous regimes arose, which, no matter how they masked their goals, and to their credit it must be said that they did not particularly hide their goals, began achieve what their unlucky predecessors, Emperor Nicholas and Kaiser Wilhelm, failed to achieve.

In one of these countries - the Soviet Union - the revival of the old imperial spirit

took place on the basis of international socialism with a frank swing at world domination, albeit not yet actual, but at least spiritual. "If the Third Rome didn't work out, then at least let the Third International work out," the cynics from Lenin's entourage quipped. In the Byzantine games of the struggle for personal power, Stalin, putting forward the slogan "building socialism in one country", frankly translated the ideology of Bolshevism into the mainstream of National Socialism, although the multinational specifics of the USSR did not allow him to embody the simplified Hitler formula: "One country, one people, one leader ! Temporarily pushing into the background the idea of a world revolution inherited from Lenin, but sincerely believing in the global prophecies of Ilyich, Stalin patiently waited for signs of the fulfillment of these prophecies in order to capture the whole world under the pretext of international assistance to class brothers and the crushing of "world capitalism".

The Hitler regime arose on the foundations of National Socialism, but the program of the National Socialist Party quickly dispelled any doubt that Hitler would embody it within the borders of Germany in 1914.

Both parties - in Moscow and in Berlin - considered themselves "workers", proclaimed their decisions on behalf of the working people, masterfully juggling the concept of "people".

The emergence in such a small "range" as Europe, of two huge predators of actually the same family and only slightly different in appearance, easily made it clear to everyone who closely followed the development of events that the two of them could not feed themselves here. And before everyone begins to fulfill their global plans, they will have to deal with each other.

The impudent plagiarist from Berlin caused legitimate irritation in Moscow. Having stolen and slightly reshaped the ideology born by the eastern neighbor, he impudently tried to pass it off as his own invention, interfering with work and frustrating Moscow's plans. Naturally, it must be destroyed. But with the maximum benefit for socialism. Stalin does not like to take risks. Everything he does, he does thoroughly. He still had time—at least he thought so.

Unlike his eastern neighbor, Hitler believes that he has no time.

Both are well aware that a fight is inevitable. One of them must be destroyed. Both also understand that this is a tactical task, since the true tasks are much broader. Getting in the way and tangled under each other's feet, testing each other at every opportunity, say, in Spain, in Yugoslavia, at Khalkhin Gol - they do not forget that their main enemy, the main obstacle on the way to the "world revolution" is England .

Stalin, with apparent pleasure, plays on the sensitive strings of European politics. His idea of collective security excites the public opinion of England and France, but Stalin, knowing full well that he is feared no less than Hitler, masterfully bluffs, arranging his proposals with pre-impossible conditions for the passage of the Red Army in the event of German aggression through the territories of either Poland or Czechoslovakia. then Romania.

Yes, and England and France look with fear at what is happening in the Stalinist empire. Constantly "checking life according to Lenin", Stalin does not stop terror for a minute. Lenin constantly urged "to substantiate and legitimize it (terror) in principle, clearly, without falsehood and without embellishment." Following the behest of the great teacher, Stalin turned terror into the norm of the state life of the USSR.

Internal affairs do not allow Stalin to focus on the main problem - the preparation of a march to Europe. But this march is impossible until order is restored in the country. The order that, in the opinion of the leader, is ideal for the fulfillment of his plan - to leave as few people as possible who are not included in any armies. They simply shouldn't be. But that's easier said than done! It is a cosmic task to correctly arrange "cadres" when it comes to almost two hundred million, but Stalin considers it completely solvable if the whole complex of "political and organizational measures" outlined by him is carried out.

He himself determines the annual figures for the Gulag, which, constantly increasing, reach their peak not in 1936, as many believe, but in 1940 and 1941.

Hitler himself managed to restore the order he needed in his own country much faster. This is understandable, given the organization of the population and the size of the territory of Germany. The stormy dynamics of the start leads Hitler further - to the Sudetenland crisis. The integrity of the young Czechoslovak Republic is guaranteed by the victorious countries of the First World War. The European crisis begins.

Public opinion puts pressure on the governments of England and France not to mess with Hitler - let him take his Sudetenland. Continuing to unnerve Hitler, Stalin, who has been cleverly pushed aside from participating in European affairs, again proposes measures "for collective security." But England and France do not want to mess with one bandit to stop another. Stalin addresses Czechoslovakia with a proposal to bring the Red Army into its territory. Beneš and Gakha shied away in horror from the outstretched hand of the Moscow dictator. As a result, after Munich, the Sudetenland goes to Hitler without a single shot being fired. The cowardly Czechoslovak army, which is significantly superior to the Wehrmacht in terms of technical equipment and combat training, confirms the German opinion about the Czechs as "a solid gang of simulators."

Hitler, like a successful bluffing player who broke the bank without a single trump card in his hands, recklessly continues the game. Seeing how the countries of the former Entente do not want to agree; especially rejoicing that he managed to humiliate the swaggering England so sarcastically by imposing the Munich Agreement on her, Hitler, in the heat of excitement, quickly outlines the next victim - Poland, considering his hands completely untied. He is wrong, but sincerely wrong. England is not going to forgive him Munich and together with France announces guarantees to Poland. Hitler publicly calls the guarantees "a piece of paper that can only be used in a closet." England feels the ironic views of the whole world - Czechoslovakia was also given guarantees!

At the same time, Stalin offers his "help" to Poland on the condition that a limited contingent of Red Army units be brought into its territory. "Ungrateful" Poland responds to the offer of "sincere help" by calling up reservists. Stalin, sucking on his pipe, disappears in clouds of tobacco smoke.

Meanwhile, Hitler sets the date for the invasion of Poland - approximately on August 26, 1939, announcing to his somewhat cowardly generals that only some postponement of the date is possible, but no later than September 1.

On February 12, 1939, the British Cabinet held a secret meeting. The meeting is attended by representatives of the British and French General Staffs. A detailed picture of Germany's capabilities is being explored:

"... The Reich economy is overstretched. The strategic raw materials will only be enough for a few months of waging a war. Hitler's fleet can be ignored for the time being. Positional warfare on the Continent behind the French fortifications of the Maginot Line and a tight blockade from the sea will suffocate the Reich by January 1940 if Hitler unleashes war on Poland in August 1939.

The Cabinet adopts a resolution: if Hitler attacks Poland, England and France will declare war on him without hesitation. The French army and the British expeditionary forces are holding back the Wehrmacht on land without taking any active action to minimize casualties, while the English fleet, with all possible support from the French, is throwing the good old noose of a naval blockade on Germany, from which there is not even a theoretical way out, other than surrender. As for the USSR, Stalin, standing knee-deep in the blood of his own people, is hardly capable of actively intervening in European affairs under such circumstances.

The Allies are wrong, but like Hitler, they are wrong sincerely. They still don't know Stalin very well. All the terror was started by him precisely in order to actively interfere in European affairs, in order to turn the USSR into a single military labor camp, bound by the most reliable cement, according to Stalin - fear. The Munich Agreement, which delayed the start of Stalin's long-anticipated European war, made him furious. But, unlike Hitler, he knows how to control himself.

On March 10, 1939, the leader delivers a report at the 18th Party Congress. As usual, he speaks in the "modern language" invented by Lenin, where peace is war, truth is a lie, love is hate, aggression is defense. As a rule, in such speeches it is immediately impossible to understand anything. But Stalin cannot contain his dissatisfaction and disappointment that the war in Europe, which he has been waiting for for almost 19 years, has not begun. He lashes out at England and France, calling them "war provocateurs" for keeping the European conflict from breaking out. But, apparently forgetting about the label "war provocateurs", which he voiced just a minute ago, the leader with unexpected frankness begins to stigmatize the "non-intervention policy" of England and France, bluntly stating that such a policy poses almost the main threat to the interests of the Soviet Union.

While Stalin, with surprising passion for him, made speeches, listening to the stormy applause of the mannequins sitting in the hall, in the midst of the congress, on March 15, Hitler captured the whole of Czechoslovakia, although under the Munich Agreement he was entitled only to the Sudetenland.

It became clear that Hitler could not be frightened. "Adolf bit the bit," American intelligence reported from Berlin in its usual manner. Similar messages, albeit in a more streamlined form, flew to almost all major countries of the world.

In the European capitals, puffing, the intelligence services of almost all countries rubbed their sides. No decision, no event could be kept secret. Gray streams of reports, adorned with bright ribbons of disinformation, coiled around the agitated Europe in the rings of a giant serpent.

Just in case, the British Cabinet continued to probe the ground about the possibility of an Anglo-Soviet military alliance (for this purpose, Prime Minister Chamberlain himself visited the Soviet embassy in London on March 16), but no one wanted this alliance. On the contrary, a very elegant plan already existed - to pit the USSR and Germany against each other and thereby solve both European and world problems. The surest way to do this, as British intelligence pointed out in a memorandum submitted to the government, was to provoke a rapprochement between Germany and the USSR.

"If these countries come to any political, and even better - to a military agreement, then the war between them will become completely inevitable and will break out almost immediately after the signing of such an agreement"

US President Roosevelt came to the same conclusion on the basis of intelligence data, having received the first reports of the emerging Soviet-German rapprochement.

"If they

(Hitler and Stalin) conclude an alliance, then with the same inevitability as day changes night, a war will begin between them.

On March 21, the closing day of the 18th Congress, the British government proposed to Stalin that the USSR, Britain, France, and Poland adopt a declaration on joint resistance to Hitler's expansion in Europe. As expected, there was no response.

March 31 England and France announced guarantees to Poland. Stalin chuckled but said nothing. In response, Hitler declared the 1935 Anglo-German Naval Agreement denounced. Taking advantage of the moment, Hitler also announced the termination of the German-Polish non-aggression pact, concluded in 1934.

April 6 Anglo-Polish agreement on mutual assistance in the event of German aggression is signed.

April 13 England and France provide guarantees for the security of Greece and Romania. The Soviet press is waging a mocking campaign against the "British guarantees", constantly reminding them of what they cost the gullible Czechoslovakia.

April 16 England and France send draft agreements on mutual assistance and support to the Soviet leadership in case, as a result of "the implementation of guarantees to Poland, the Western powers will be drawn into the war with Germany." But there is no specific answer. To the English, if they had any doubts about this at all, everything becomes clear. Stalin does not need any measures, pacts and guarantees capable of ensuring peace in Europe. He needs a war, and he will do everything in his power to make it break out as soon as possible.

However, to Stalin's credit, it must be said that he did not particularly try to hide this.

At the same 18th congress, the head of the Main Political Directorate of the Workers 'and Peasants' Red Army, one of the leader's closest associates, Lev Mekhlis, to thunderous applause from the audience howling with delight, clearly deciphered Stalin's thought:

"If the second imperialist war turns its edge against the first socialist state in the world, then transfer military operations to enemy territory, fulfill our international duties and multiply the number of Soviet republics!"

On May 3, 1939, on the last page of the Pravda newspaper, in the Brief News section, a small message appeared stating that the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs "M. Litvinov was relieved of the post of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs at his own request due to his state of health." Comrade V.M. Molotov was appointed to the post of people's commissar, it was said in the same message.

In the world this message has slammed the tocsin. Litvinov, a supporter of collective security measures against impudent Germany, was removed, and after all, Stalin deliberately kept him at his post, demonstrating to Hitler the absolute impossibility of any official negotiations.

In Berlin, jubilation reigned. In Paris and London, too, everyone got it right. Especially in London. Stalin made the first hint at the possibility of rapprochement with Hitler. Fine. They themselves will not notice how, in a fit of friendly embrace, they will begin to choke each other. Serious attempts to conclude any agreement in the USSR are being stopped. There will also be, of course, Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations, the frivolity of which will be obvious both to the contracting parties and practically to the whole world - with the main goal of angering Hitler.

And military drums, timpani and trumpets continue to rumble over Moscow. Even in his New Year's Address to the Soviet People, Stalin, in the Pravda newspaper of January 1, 1939, called on the Soviet Union to be ready to "defeat any enemy on its territory", putting into circulation a new military doctrine -

"beat the enemy with little blood on his territory." True, at the same time, according to the rules of "new speech", it was necessary to add, as in a spell, the magic words "if the USSR is attacked."

How much this preamble meant nothing was shown by subsequent events full of gross provocations.

Stalin was certainly an amazing person. Until recently, he publicly sharply criticized the theory of the so-called "blitzkrieg" (lightning war), calling it "a product of the bourgeois fear of the proletarian revolution", and no one has yet had time to gasp like Stalin, translating the understandable expression "blitzkrieg" to "new speech", formulated, as it seemed to everyone, his own military doctrine - "with little blood on foreign territory." What is this if not the same "blitzkrieg"?

"A crushing blow to enemy territory" began its march across the country. This was also discussed on January 21 at a solemn meeting on the occasion of the anniversary of Lenin's death, at which those sitting in the hall for the last time had the pleasure of seeing the iron people's commissar Yezhov free. The blow was hysterically shouted on February 23, the day that Stalin ordered to be considered the day of the Red Army. This call was constantly heard in the speeches of the delegates of the XVIII Party Congress and even ... at a mourning meeting on the occasion of the death of the famous Soviet pilot Polina Osipenko in a plane crash.

Just four days after the removal of Litvinov - on May 7, 1939 - at the solemn ceremony of graduation of students of military academies, Stalin made a short but expressive speech, in particular, saying:

"The Workers' and Peasants' Army must become the most aggressive of all the offensive armies that have ever existed!" The thunderous applause that greeted the appearance of the leader on the podium drowned out the magical preamble he uttered indistinctly: "If the enemy imposes war on us."

Almost openly, a huge invasion army is unfolding in Europe. In an atmosphere of unprecedented military psychosis, the military budget was doubled, and the military industry, which had never been seen before in the world, continued to develop.

But who is this enemy that must be defeated on his own territory? It is never called directly. There are enemies around. Whomever they indicate specifically, we will smash on his own territory with little bloodshed ...

The thunder of military marches coming from Moscow and Berlin does not really scare London politicians. Informative reports on the state of the Wehrmacht and the Red Army regularly fall on the desks of Whitehall's Victorian-style offices. The Wehrmacht during the invasion of Czechoslovakia, without meeting any resistance, showed itself far from the best. Tanks got stuck even on the roads. The soldiers are poorly trained. Constant traffic jams and general confusion indicate that the work of headquarters at all levels is very far from perfect ...

On the other hand, the Red Army. The massacre perpetrated by Stalin practically reduced the largest army in the world to a huge herd of sheep, cowardly waiting for the next butcher's ax to fall on.

"There is no initiative. Drunkenness and theft flourish in the army, denunciations are pouring in, no one trusts each other.

The work of the headquarters is almost completely paralyzed. The doctrine put forward by Stalin of conducting an offensive war "on foreign territory" has not yet found any reflection in operational documents. There are also no plans for defense. A huge army is deployed along the border, like an unruly herd at the paddock fence.

The belligerent statements of the two leaders of world totalitarianism can be considered a bluff to a large extent, but their complete irresponsibility can lead to the most unexpected development of events. At the same time, the first steps of the dictators towards each other are being planned and carefully taken, which can only be welcomed, because when this rapprochement occurs, a war between the two continental superpredators will become inevitable.

So far, the entire rapprochement initiative comes from Moscow, which, given the unexpected replacement of Litvinov by Molotov, is not surprising. So, two days after the removal of Litvinov, Georgy Astakhov, Charge d'Affaires of the USSR, appeared at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin and, in a conversation with Schnurre's adviser, hinted at the possibility of resuming trade negotiations.

On May 20, the German ambassador in Moscow, Count Schulenburg, talked for two hours with the new People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Molotov, who made it clear to the German that there were prerequisites for a radical improvement in Soviet-German economic and political relations. When asked by Schulenburg how this could be done in practice, Molotov, saying goodbye, replied: "We both need to think about this ..."

On May 21, the British and French General Staffs hold another secret meeting, at which the earlier decisions on the tactics of waging war with Germany and its rapid strangulation in the event of aggression against Poland are confirmed. The question is no longer worth fighting or not in the event of an attack on Poland. The answer is unambiguous - to fight. At the same time, the militant rage of Moscow is cooling down. Several English journals report the concentration of British bombers on Middle Eastern airfields. Within their range is the only Soviet source of oil - Baku. The Soviet Union does not have a second Baku, and one can easily imagine what will happen to the mines that have not been modernized since 1912 if British bombs fall on them.



On May 22, in an atmosphere of operatic pomposity, Hitler and Mussolini sign an agreement on a military alliance - the "Pact of Steel". After signing the pact, Hitler confesses to his friend and ally that he intends to attack Poland before autumn. The Duce, in his own words, "cold hands." But Hitler does not build any illusions about the combat capability of his ally. The main thing is that the cunning British do not lure Italy to their side, as happened in the First World War.

On May 23, Hitler gathers his top generals for a new meeting. He again reminds them that war is inevitable, since his decision to attack Poland at the first opportunity remains unchanged. On the Fuhrer's desk lies the minutes of the last secret meeting of the English and French general staffs obtained by intelligence. Hitler is skeptical. He does not believe that these Anglo-Saxons, fat with luxury, could decide to go to war. They have already shown their true colors in Munich. But in any case, this does not change anything, since his main goal is to bring England to its knees. If the British want war, they will get it. Surprise attack should destroy their fleet, and

finished with them.

The generals do not share the optimism of their Fuhrer. On the contrary, they believe that Germany is completely unprepared for war, especially for war with England, relying on the resources of her vast empire. The generals - all participants in the First World War - were well aware of the English plan for a future war. In the present state of Germany, it will happen exactly as the British plan.

On May 24, the head of the logistics of the armed forces of the Reich, General Thomas, presents a secret report to the Fuhrer. In his report, the general draws the Fuhrer's attention to the following: the German armed forces, including the Wehrmacht, Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine, have a total supply of fuel for six months, all types of rubber, including raw rubber, for no more than two months; non-ferrous metals, nickel and chromium - for three months, aluminum - for six months. No less a crisis state with ammunition. In the air force warehouses, air bombs are barely enough for three months of a low-intensity war. Artillery and tanks have three rounds of ammunition in reserve - for three weeks of a not very intense war with a deliberately weak enemy.

At the same time, the Fuhrer received a formidable paper from the board of the Reichsbank, where, with the frankness characteristic of bankers, it was said that the financial situation of the Reich was close to disaster. In the event of war, the financiers emphasized, with the total mobilization of all means and resources, by 1943 Germany would exhaust everything to the bottom and cease to exist as a state.

A copy of General Thomas's top secret report is handed over to Moscow on the same day that it is furiously crumpled by Hitler. Two hours to translate - and Stalin has it.

We must make it clear to Hitler that the USSR is ready to liquidate his shortage of raw materials, to supply him with everything necessary, if only he decides on a European war, especially a war with England.

On May 30, Georgy Astakhov, having declared to the German Foreign Ministry, where no one called him, openly announced to the Deputy Reich Minister Weizsäcker that the doors for a new trade agreement between the USSR and Germany were "long open") and he does not understand that it is the Germans who are so indecisive in these doors they crumple. The stunned Weizsäcker answered Astakhov that the recently concluded Berlin-Rome pact was not directed against the USSR, but against the warmongers - England and France, about which Astakhov did not ask him, but took note of what was said with pleasure.

Both sides still look at each other with suspicion, timidly taking the first steps towards them. The Germans are afraid that Moscow and London will unexpectedly agree among themselves, Moscow

he also acts extra-cautiously, on the one hand, not to frighten the Germans, and on the other, to prevent London from understanding the ongoing Byzantine game. London sees how inexorably the two critical masses, the USSR and Germany, are drawing closer together. An explosion is inevitable. However, such a slow development of events begins to unnerve Stalin. If Hitler really decided to attack Poland no later than September 1, then why is he behaving so hesitantly?!

Time is running out, and there is very little time left before September 1st. Hitler cannot cancel the date set by him, but it cannot be allowed that, instead of the date of his next triumph, it becomes the date of another catastrophe in Germany. He understands that the Poles will not cowardly lay down their arms, like the Czechs. This will be a war. There is nowhere to go - an alliance with Stalin is needed. Moreover, it is simply necessary!

While Hitler can't come to a decision by issuing instructions to his Foreign Office and immediately canceling them, Stalin takes the next cautious step forward. On July 18, the Soviet trade representative in Berlin, Yevgeny Babarin, appeared at the German Foreign Ministry to the economic adviser Schnurre and stated that the USSR wanted to expand and intensify Soviet-German trade relations. Babarin brought a draft agreement with a list of everything that the USSR intended and could supply to the Reich.

Hitler and his advisers were breathless. The project listed everything that General Thomas sounded the alarm in his report, and in such quantity that it was possible to win back not one, but two world wars!

Ribbentrop instructs Schnurre to invite Astakhov and Babarin to a chic restaurant and probe them over a glass of wine in an informal intimate setting.

The meeting at the restaurant on July 26 dragged on past midnight. Both Russians kept themselves at ease and frankly. Georgy Astakhov, to the nod of Babarin in agreement, explained that the policy of restoring friendly relations fully corresponds to the vital interests of both countries. In Moscow, explained the Soviet chargé d'affaires, they absolutely cannot understand the reasons for such a hostile attitude of Nazi Germany towards the Soviet Union. Schnurre's adviser was quick to assure the Russians that the Reich's eastern policy had already completely changed. Germany in no way threatens Russia. By contrast, Germany is looking in the exact opposite direction. The target of her hostile policy is England. After all, by and large,

Germany, Russia and Italy are linked by a common ideology of socialism directed against the decaying capitalist democracies. Is not it?

The German ambassador Schulenburg, bombarded by desperate telegrams from Berlin, is trying to get an appointment with Molotov, but does not see in Moscow those radiant smiles that Astakhov and Babarin lavished in a Berlin restaurant. The instructions of Ribbentrop and Weizsäcker require the ambassador to move negotiations with the Russians into the area of "concrete" agreements and try to get Stalin's consent to a state visit to Moscow by Reich Minister Ribbentrop.

On August 3, Molotov received Schulenburg more than coldly. Yes, the USSR is interested in improving Soviet-German relations, but so far it sees only "good intentions" from Germany. The People's Commissar reminds the ambassador of the Anti-Comintern Pact, Germany's support for Japan during the Soviet-Japanese conflict at Lake Khasan, and the exclusion of the Soviet Union from the Munich Agreement. Schulenburg gets the impression that the Russians do not want any agreement with Germany at all, but still hope to reach an agreement behind the German back with the Western Allies.

On August 14, Ribbentrop instructs Schulenburg to urgently meet with

Molotov. The minister reminds the ambassador of the former friendship between the two countries and emphasizes that he speaks "on behalf of the Führer." Ribbentrop asks to obtain permission from the Russians for his visit to Moscow, so that he can "on behalf of the Führer, express his views personally to Mr. Stalin." He demands that Schulenburg submit all this to Molotov in writing. Then Stalin would be accurately informed about the German intentions.

Hitler is ready to divide between Germany and the USSR not only Poland, but all of Eastern Europe, including the Baltic states, which it cedes to the Soviet Union in advance. Let Stalin know about it!

On August 15, Schulenburg again made his way to an appointment with Molotov and, nervously, read Ribbentrop's message to him. Molotov welcomes Germany's desire to improve relations with the USSR. As for Ribbentrop's visit, it requires "sufficient preparation for the exchange of views to lead to concrete results." To what results? Well, let's say, how will the German government react to the conclusion of a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union? Can it influence Japan to end the conflicts on the Mongolian border? How

will Germany react to the accession of the Baltic states to the USSR? Let all this be thought over in Berlin, and then we will accept Ribbentrop.

Schulenburg, an old diplomat of the Kaiser school, is stunned. The Soviet Union proposes a non-aggression pact while in Moscow the Chiefs of Staff of the USSR, Britain and France are negotiating joint military action against Germany. The height of political cynicism! But the count's indignation is quickly cooled by another directive telegram from Berlin that arrived on August 16, where he is required to see Molotov again and inform him that "Germany is ready to conclude a non-aggression pact with the USSR for a period, if the Soviet Union wishes, for 25 years. Moreover, Germany is ready to guarantee the accession of the Baltic states to the USSR. And, finally, Germany is ready to influence the improvement and consolidation of Soviet-Japanese relations. The Führer believes that, taking into account the external situation, fraught with the possibility of serious events every day, a quick and fundamental clarification of German-Russian relations is desirable.

In Berlin, with growing impatience and nervousness, they are waiting for an answer from Moscow, bombarding Schulenburg with additional instructions and indications of the most trifling nature. For example, to report the exact time of the upcoming reception at Molotov's.

Molotov met Schulenburg very coldly. He again recalls the former hostility of Germany towards the USSR. He has nothing to add to what he said about Ribbentrop's visit last time. He hands the German ambassador a note full of reproaches, suspicion and omissions. The note ends with the words: "If, however, the German Government has now decided to change its past policy in the direction of a serious improvement in political relations with the Soviet Union, the Soviet Government can only welcome such a change and, for its part, is ready to revise its own policy in the context of a serious improvement in relations with Germany". But for this, the Soviet note emphasizes, "serious and practical steps are needed." This is not done in one jump, as suggested by Ribbentrop.

Stalin pulls. Let the Germans mature properly and offer Moscow the maximum they can. He is well aware that in his hands is the key to launching a European war, and thinks through possible options, weighing his own chances.

Stalin hesitates. A huge army is already deployed along the western borders. Almost the entire economy of a huge country works for the war. The secret figures of the reports lying on

Stalin's table are encouraging and inspiring. If two years ago the military industry produced annually 1911 guns, 860 aircraft and 740 tanks, then by the end of the past, in 1938, the economy, almost completely transferred to the war footing, began to produce 12687 guns, 5469 aircraft and 2270 tanks per year. A new law on "universal conscription" is already ready, which should increase the army, which is already unthinkable for peacetime, almost three times.

Stalin is pleased. Almost triple military superiority over any combination of possible adversaries has been created. Perhaps you can start.

And the situation in Berlin was already reminiscent of panic. Every effort was made to hide the nervousness of the leadership from the army.

Another telegram flies to the German embassy in Moscow with the note "Very urgent. Secret", demanding that Schulenburg immediately get a new meeting with Molotov.

The ambassador was instructed that he should remind Molotov of the successful passage of the "first stage" of the negotiations, i.e. about the Soviet-German trade agreement, which was signed "just on this day" (August 18), and about the need to move to the "second stage" of negotiations. Ribbentrop again reminds that he is ready to urgently fly to Moscow, having the authority to negotiate with "taking into account all Russian wishes." What wishes? The tormented Ribbentrop no longer hides this either:

"I have been given the right to sign a special protocol regulating the interests of both parties in various foreign policy issues. For example, in establishing spheres of interest in the Baltic region.

However, this seems

only possible through oral communication

, Ribbentrop emphasizes.

There is nowhere to retreat. He instructs Schulenburg that this time, under no circumstances should he accept the Russian "no".

The tension is rising. In German ports, in full combat readiness, trembling and vibrating from cranking engines, are "pocket" battleships and divisions of submarines, waiting for an order to enter the communications of the British. But the order cannot be given until news is received from Moscow, and every hour of delay means that the warships will not have time to deploy in the assigned areas before September 1st. The two army groups intended to defeat Poland must also be brought closer to the frontier. But there is no signal, because Stalin has not yet said yes.

The hours are ticking by, but there is no news from Moscow. The tension becomes completely unbearable. In the Fuhrer's waiting room, the phone rings piercingly. The adjutant hands the phone to Ribbentrop. Advisor Schnurre reports. Negotiations with the Russians for a trade treaty yesterday ended in full agreement, but the Russians evaded signing the treaty, saying they would do so at noon today. Just received a call from the Soviet embassy that the signing of the treaty was being postponed due to political

considerations in connection with the new instructions from Moscow.

Meanwhile, in Moscow, the proud Count von Schulenburg is seeking a new reception from Molotov. He read another message from Ribbentrop.

Molotov listens to Schulenburg to the end. No, he says, our position remains

former. First, a trade agreement. Then we will publish it and see what effect it will cause abroad. And only then will we deal with the non-aggression act and the protocols. At the present time the Soviet government cannot even give an approximate date for Ribbentrop's visit. Such a visit requires very thorough preparation.

Schulenburg, feeling that "his heart is about to break", returns to the embassy.

Unexpectedly, it is reported that Molotov asks the ambassador to come to him again today at 16.30.

Smiling amiably, Molotov told the stunned Schulenburg that the Soviet government had revised its views and now believed that the non-aggression pact must be concluded as soon as possible. Therefore, Molotov was instructed to hand over to the German side for study the draft of this treaty, as the Soviet side understands it. In this connection, the Soviet government agrees to receive Reichsminister Ribbentrop sometime on 26 or 27 August.

Count Schulenburg understands that this change in Molotov's views was due to the direct intervention of Stalin, and this intervention took place sometime between half past two and half past four on August 19th. The jubilant ambassador quickly writes a telegram to Berlin:

"Secret. Of extreme importance. The Soviet government agrees to receive the Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs in Moscow a week after the announcement of the signing of the economic agreement. Molotov said that if the signing of the economic agreement was announced tomorrow, then the Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs could arrive in Moscow on August 26 or 27 ..."

August 26 or 27! Forgetting about pride, Hitler personally sits down to write a message to Stalin, asking the Soviet dictator to receive Ribbentrop as soon as possible. In anticipation of the execution of his own plans, Hitler forgets how much dirt and hatred they poured with Stalin on each other's heads over the past five years.

"Moscow. Mr Stalin.

I sincerely welcome the signing of the new German-Soviet

a trade agreement as the first step in changing German-Soviet relations. The conclusion of the non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union means to me the long-term basis of German policy. Thus, Germany is resuming the political course that was beneficial to both states during the past centuries ...

I have accepted the draft non-aggression pact submitted by your Foreign Minister, Mr. Molotov, but I consider it essential to clear up some issues related to this pact as soon as possible. The essence of the additional protocol so desired by the Soviet Union, in my opinion, can be agreed upon in the shortest possible time if the responsible German representative can personally come to Moscow for negotiations. The Reich government sees no other way to agree on and approve the text of an additional protocol in the shortest possible time.

Voltage

between Germany and Poland is becoming intolerable... Any day a crisis could arise. Germany is now determined to defend the interests of the Reich with all the means at her disposal .

In my opinion, it is desirable that our two countries establish new relations without wasting time. I therefore again propose that you receive my Foreign Minister

cases on Tuesday, August 22, in extreme cases - on Wednesday, August 23. The Reich Foreign Minister has full authority to draw up and sign the non-aggression pact and its protocol. Taking into account the international situation, the stay of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Moscow for more than two days seems completely impossible. I will be glad to receive your reply as soon as possible.

Adolf Hitler".

Hours of agonizing waiting passed, interrupted by nervous calls to Schulenburg. What decision will the almighty Kremlin dictator take?

Finally, at 9:35 p.m. on August 21, 1939, Stalin's reply arrives in Berlin, composed in an elegant "new language":

"To the Chancellor of the German Reich A. Hitler.

Thank you for your letter. I hope that the German-Soviet non-aggression pact will mark a decisive turn in the improvement of political relations between our countries.

The Soviet Government has instructed me to inform you that it agrees that Herr von Ribbentrop should arrive in Moscow on 23 August.

I. Stalin.

The German radio, which was broadcasting a musical program, suddenly interrupted the transmission, calling the listeners to attention. The solemn voice of the announcer announced an emergency message: "The Reich government and the Soviet government have come to an agreement to conclude a non-aggression pact with each other. The Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs will arrive in Moscow on Wednesday, August 23, to negotiate.

The next day, August 22, Hitler called his generals to a new conference, urging them to wage war "brutally and without mercy," emphasizing that he would probably give the order to attack Poland on August 26 - six days earlier than planned.

Noting also the greatness and authority of such personalities as Mussolini and Franco, Hitler emphasized that neither in England nor in France "there are no outstanding personalities" of such a magnitude as he, and therefore these countries do not pose any serious danger.

On August 23, around noon, two large three-engined Condors landed in Moscow with Ribbentrop and his large retinue. The Reich Minister was met by Molotov and, as they say, "other officials."

Both sides, having quickly agreed on the division of Poland and on granting the USSR a free hand in the Baltics and Finland, unanimously agreed that England was solely to blame for the current international crisis.

Stalin kindly listened to Ribbentrop's complaint and, puffing on his pipe, thoughtfully remarked: "If England dominates the world, then this happened

thanks to the stupidity of other countries, which have always allowed themselves to be deceived. Fascinated by Stalin, Ribbentrop began to justify himself for the Anti-Comintern Pact, assuring the Soviet ruler that it was primarily directed against the "Western democracies."

"We sincerely want peace," Ribbentrop assured Stalin. "But England provokes a war and puts us in a stalemate."

Stalin's hand rested gently on the shoulder of the Reich Minister. "I believe that this is true," the father of all nations said almost tenderly, "Germany wants peace."

Then Stalin raised his glass and, to the great surprise of all those present, made a toast. "I know how the German people love their Fuhrer. So I want to drink to his health!" Many toasts were proclaimed and much drunk. Last toast to

the German people - also said, raising the Caucasian horn high, Stalin. No one offered to drink to the Soviet people. Somehow they forgot about him.

What did Hitler think? Didn't he himself prophetically write in Mein Kampf:

"The very fact of an alliance with Russia will make the next war inevitable. And in the end, Germany will be finished."

Indeed, he had nowhere to go!

## Chapter 2

On August 24, Ribbentrop returned to Berlin. Hitler also arrived there from his residence in Berchtesgaden. Ribbentrop enthusiastically reported to the Fuhrer about his trip to Moscow. As soon as the German troops reach Warsaw, the Russians attack the Poles from the east. They will come up with a reason for the strike themselves. They will fully provide us with raw materials and moral support for the war in the West. For this, Stalin asks for half of Poland, the Baltic states, Finland and Bessarabia. A lot of? After all, these are old Russian territories lost during the national catastrophe of 1917. OK then. Let him take it, you vile Asian extortionist! But, my Fuhrer, all this was agreed in advance. Yes, yes, let him take it! Thank you, Ribbentrop! Everything is fine! At dawn on the 26th we start!

Fulfilling the order of the Fuhrer, German troops are rapidly advancing to the Polish border. At the tip of the wedge, in the direction of the main blow, providing a "blitzkrieg", the tank corps of General Guderian is deployed.

Fifty-year-old Heinz Guderian is the founder and soul of the armored forces of the Reich. A fanatical fan of the tactics of tank wedges, the theory that he learned back in the mid-20s in distant Kazan (!), Was impatiently waiting for the dawn to prove for the first time in practice to the doubters how a modern war is being waged. His tanks should break through the Polish front with a powerful blow, dropping the scattered Polish troops into prepared "bags", and swiftly, without waiting for the infantry, move to Warsaw.



The day before, the corps was alerted and, after a many-hour march, approached the starting line. Standing at his staff tankette, the general looked with joy and excitement at the columns of tanks passing by him. Well done! Not a single lagging car! The morale of his tankers is as high as ever. Tank commanders, leaning out of the tower hatches, smiling, greeted their beloved general.

And at that moment, out of nowhere, a liaison officer who came from nowhere handed Guderian a package marked urgently. The general opened the package and could not believe his eyes: the offensive was cancelled. Fuhrer's order. Guderian glanced at his watch. There was no time for emotion. Jumping on the bandwagon of the headquarters armored personnel carrier, the general rushed after his tanks in order to have time to stop them.

The huge army of the Reich, ready for the invasion, froze at the very threshold of war. Headquarters puzzled over what could have happened? And the smallest thing happened. Speaking in Parliament, British Prime Minister Chamberlain, calling the Soviet-German treaty "an unpleasant surprise", further stated the following:

"In Berlin, its publication is greeted with extreme cynicism, as a huge diplomatic victory, which will eliminate any military danger, since it is assumed that we and France will now no longer fulfill our obligations towards Poland. False hopes!"

Even the day before, on August 23, the British Ambassador in Berlin, Henderson, handed the Führer a personal message from Chamberlain. Calling on Hitler not to entertain the illusion that the pact signed in Moscow would change England's position with regard to its obligations to Poland, the British Prime Minister openly warned the Fuhrer of the inevitability of war.

Believing that he had made his position "absolutely clear", Chamberlain again urged Hitler to seek a peaceful solution to his differences with Poland, offering British mediation, cooperation and assistance to this end.

Hitler, with his frivolous militancy, did not take this message into account. You never know what you can write in a personal message. Let's see what the British will sing when they find out about the treaty with Stalin! But Chamberlain's speech in Parliament sobered Hitler up like a blow to the head. A speech in parliament is not a personal message, these are words spoken to the whole world. Now it is clear that the British are not bluffing - they are ready to start a war and fight it for as long as necessary.

To tell the truth, I don't want to fight them at all. And for what, in fact, to fight with them? For their empire? Until you reach out, while your arms are still short - there is no fleet.

Before the eyes of Hitler again there are pictures of the battles on Ypres and the Somme. Desperate attempts by the Kaiser's army to break through to the English Channel, monstrous losses without any result. Dim as hell, the lights and the monstrous smells of the evacuation hospital, where he, poisoned by English gases, beat against the iron bars of a soldier's bed, having learned about the surrender ...

Grand Admiral Raeder literally pushes his way to the reception, dispersing the adjutants. The normally calm and reserved Admiral now makes no secret of his near-hysteria state. Almost half of Germany's merchant and passenger ships are at sea or in foreign ports. War with England means their inevitable death. If the war begins with the loss of half of the trade youth, then it can no longer be waged, but simply surrender!

The Admiral, like Hitler, has something to remember. He remembers how they went out to sea in the last war, shrugging their heads in their shoulders, watching the horizon with horror, trying with all their might to avoid any combat contact with the British. He remembers how cowardly they are,

shelled the fishing villages on the east coast of England under cover of fog, trembling with excitement and fear, in the hope that they would not be caught. And when they were nevertheless caught at Jutland and forced into battle, then Raeder knew better than others that it was not a "great victory", but rather a "miraculous salvation". And only then - until the very Scapa Flow - they were afraid even to stick their nose into the sea, reading patriotic pamphlets about how the British were defeated, while Germany was already in agony from the naval blockade. No! It's one thing to hate England and openly call on God to punish her, it's quite another to feel again the merciless gaze of fifteen-inch English guns.

The generals, who also remembered the last war well, were also nervous. They were divided into two categories: those who experienced triumph on the eastern front, breaking up their enemy and imposing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on him, looked at the future conflict more optimistically than those who survived the shame of capitulation in the Compiègne Forest, signing it under the malicious smirk of Marshal Foch. But both those and others do not want to fight on two fronts anymore.

Hitler thinks. Suppressing another hysterical outburst with difficulty, he gives the order to stop the troops. Having expelled the military from the office, Hitler called Goering and said that he had canceled the order to invade Poland.

"Is this a temporary measure or a final solution?" asked the astonished Reichsmarshal.

Hitler rarely hid the truth from his "Parteigenossen" and therefore honestly said in a tired voice: "I have to see if we can not eliminate the British interference ...".

And so Hitler, who quite recently stated that his greatest fear is that "some dirty pig does not fit in at the last moment as an intermediary", he himself begins feverishly looking for this intermediary. It turns out to be a certain Dalerus - a Swedish citizen, a banker and businessman, an international adventurer who worked for five intelligence services, including Soviet and, of course, English.

Dahlerus is on warm friendly terms with Goering, with the British Foreign Minister Halifax, with the Polish Foreign Minister Vek and, of course, with Madame Kollontai, who conquered Stockholm with her elegant dressings and lectures on true freedom of spirit and conscience in the Soviet Union.

Dahlerus receives instructions from the Germans to tell the British that Hitler is ready to negotiate with the Poles peacefully. He only needs the Danzig corridor, and not even the entire corridor, but only the area along the railway track, with several stations ...

In Moscow, Stalin breaks his cigarette with a crunch, but instead of filling his pipe with tobacco, he angrily throws it into the ashtray. The dictator's eyes turn completely yellow. It is at such moments that the fingers of the faithful and experienced Poskrebyshev grow cold. What Stalin feared most of all happened: at the last moment, the corporal chickened out! Fascist scum! Trash! Cowardly bastard!

In the luxurious mansion of the Soviet naval attaché Captain 1st Rank Vorontsov, located in the Grunewald district of Berlin, on the evening of August 27, 1939, several people were sitting. One of them was the frigate captain (captain of the 2nd rank) Norbert von Baumbach, the German naval attaché in the USSR, who arrived in Berlin on business in order to receive clarifications from his command "in the light of new relations with the USSR." In the second, one could recognize the naval adjutant of the Fuhrer himself, Captain Zur See (Captain 1st Rank) Karl Puttkamer.

Vorontsov spoke, the Germans listened. With a graceful bone knife, Vorontsov drove along the map of the North Atlantic. German merchant ships in foreign ports and on the ocean have nothing to fear from the coming conflict with England. They should change course

north and go to Murmansk, where they can hide for a while from the British, and then, taking advantage of the bad weather and the impending polar night, break through along the Norwegian coast to Germany.

The Soviet government gave permission to shelter German ships in the northern ports of the USSR. The British do not expect this at all and will probably miss the whole operation. They will catch German ships in a completely different place: on the approaches to the English Channel and in the North Sea. A warm and friendly welcome awaits German sailors in Murmansk. Employees of the German embassy in Moscow can go there in advance ...

Meanwhile, Dalerus, chosen as an intermediary, having received appropriate instructions from Moscow, deliberately frustrates his mission, somewhere without saying something, or vice versa, saying too much.

"Don't you understand," Dalerus confided to his

friend Goering - that the war was already a foregone conclusion by the British. But for the time being, with the USSR as a friendly neutral, you don't have to worry too much. The English need to be given a good, short lesson, and they will no doubt go to the world. Goering nods. Dalerus' reasoning is in complete agreement with his views.

Admiral Raeder's report on the unexpected offer of the USSR to shelter German ships in Murmansk did not surprise Hitler. The information that began to flow to the Fuhrer in the last hours clearly indicated that the USSR was not just a "neutral", even a friendly one, but almost an ally. Mutual hatred of England is stronger than minor ideological differences, mainly in wording. He knows more than the Admiral, but he doesn't tell Raeder yet.

The possibility of basing German submarines on Soviet bases on the Kola Peninsula is being considered, from where they can conduct combat operations against the British with great efficiency. Soviet economic deliveries, as he was informed today, will not be carried out under the newly concluded trade agreement. They will be doubled. Moreover, if Germany, due to the British blockade, cannot carry out maritime trade with neutral countries, then the Soviet Trans-Siberian Railway is at the service of Germany.

The fighting enthusiasm of the Fuhrer, warmed up by Stalin's promises, did not sleep even after he was informed that on August 28 an Anglo-Polish agreement on mutual military assistance in the event of German aggression was signed. Hitler

You can't lose the moment when practically all of Russia's raw material power (and perhaps even its military power) has been so unexpectedly placed at your disposal. The deadline for the invasion of Poland is 1 September.

In the Soviet Union, the newspapers do not comment on the pact with Hitler that has just been concluded. The press is full of reports of military preparations in Poland, England and France:

"... War hysteria in Poland. general mobilization. Polish cavalry preparing to march on Berlin. Monstrous pogroms of ethnic Germans in many cities of Poland. Defenseless Germany is once again getting ready to be torn to pieces by imperialist predators!"

August 31 Molotov makes a report at the session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. You can not stand on ceremony with the "deputies" sitting in the hall. But the true plans of the Kremlin must be hidden from the world. Let world public opinion translate his "new speech" into human language for the time being, and then it will be too late. Molotov explains the essence of the

## German-Soviet Pact:

"We all know that since the Nazis came to power, relations between the Soviet Union and Germany have been tense. But, as Comrade Stalin said on March 10, "we are for business agreements with all countries."

It seems that in Germany they correctly understood Comrade Stalin's statements and drew the right conclusions. August 23 should be regarded as a date of great historical importance. This is a turning point in the history of Europe and not only Europe. More recently, the German Nazis pursued a foreign policy that was very hostile towards the Soviet Union. Yes, in the recent past... the Soviet Union and Germany were enemies. But now the situation has changed, and we are no longer enemies...

According to the Soviet-German agreement, the Soviet Union is not obliged to fight either on the side of the British or on the side of the Germans. The USSR pursues its own policy, which is determined by the interests of the peoples of the USSR, and no one else. (Stormy applause)

If these gentlemen have such a passionate desire to fight, let them fight themselves without the Soviet Union. (Laughter, applause) And we'll see what kind of warriors they are. (Loud laughter, applause)."

It was impossible to say frankly. Let them fight. We will see what kind of warriors they are. And when the "interests of the peoples of the USSR" so require, then we will intervene. On which side? And this, as demanded again by the "interests of the peoples of the USSR." The simpleton Hitler, apparently, did not understand the "new talk" at all, since a little later he publicly declared that he was ready to support every word from Molotov's speech at the Supreme Council.

In the heat of continuous holidays and rejoicing, the Soviet people simply did not notice the beginning of the Second World War, and the whole world, in turn, somehow did not notice the new USSR law on military duty, which almost tripled the size of the Red Army. Buried on the last pages of newspapers, small notes with the standard heading "On the German-Polish conflict" created the impression of an insignificant local war, which had no meaning either for the USSR or for the rest of the world. The armed conflict, Pravda noted, began due to an attack by a group of Polish soldiers on a German radio station in the border town of Gleiwitz. Germany, exhausted by endless Polish provocations and subjected to direct aggression from Poland, was forced to take up arms.

The restraint of the Soviet press in no way conveys the joyful excitement that seized Stalin.

His plan was completely successful! The second imperialist war in Europe has begun. Now it is necessary to undertake the implementation of the second phase of the plan - the capture of Europe.

The day before, in Berlin, Hitler, accepting his credentials from the new Soviet ambassador Alexander Shkvtsev, was gloomy and thoughtful. The Anglo-French ultimatums demanding the immediate withdrawal of German troops from Poland were running out. Hitler was tormented by doubts: would his acquired Moscow friend let him down at the last moment? Stalin specifically sent Shkvtsev at that very moment to the vacant post of the Soviet ambassador in order to cheer up the Fuhrer. Everything will be as agreed.

Hitler was especially interested in when the Soviet troops would invade Poland. Naively, he believed that this action would automatically make the USSR his ally, since England and France would be forced to declare war on the Soviet Union as well. He did not yet know the methods of Stalin, who had gone through the Leninist school of annexing the republics of Transcaucasia and the vast regions of Central Asia to the USSR. Even such a hardened political cynic,

what Hitler was like, more than once one will have to be amazed and admire Stalin's methods of seizing foreign territories.

Meanwhile, the war in Poland did not go exactly as planned in Berlin. On all sectors of the front, the Poles put up fierce resistance. The Polish troops, dissected by Guderian's tank wedges, having imposed a battle on the Dżura on the Germans and threatening the exit of large cavalry masses to the rear of the tank groups, managed to avoid encirclement and withdraw the main forces of their army behind the Vistula, where the Polish command hoped, regrouping forces, to go on the counteroffensive.

The entire press of the world, including the German one, noted the heroic resistance of the Polish army. The defense of Westerplatte, Hel, Gdynia and Warsaw aroused the admiration of the whole world, and even the *Völkischer Beobachter* called the battle on the Dżura "the most fierce in history." The Soviet press kept quiet about all this. On the contrary, from issue to issue, all Soviet newspapers noted with surprise that the Poles did not offer any resistance to the Germans, that Poland was actually occupied, and it was not known where its government was located.

On September 14, the *Pravda* newspaper summed up this behavior of the Soviet press. "The question may arise," the newspaper asked in an editorial, "why the Polish army does not offer any resistance to the Germans? This is because Poland is not a one-national country. Only 60% of the population are Poles, the rest are Ukrainians, Belarusians and Jews... Eleven million Ukrainians and Belarusians lived in Poland in a state of national oppression... The Polish government pursued a policy of forced Polonization..." That is why no one wants to fight for such a country.

While abroad they were guessing what the monstrous nonsense contained in *Pravda* means, the solution did not take long. On September 17, the Polish ambassador to Moscow, Vaclav Grzybowski, was urgently summoned to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.

Deputy People's Commissar Potemkin, who received him, without grief in his eyes and without intonations in his voice, read out a note as follows:

"The German-Polish war clearly showed the internal bankruptcy of the Polish state ... Warsaw, as the capital of Poland, no longer exists. The Polish government has collapsed and shows no signs of life. This means that the Polish state and the Polish government actually ceased to exist. Thus, the treaties concluded between the USSR and Poland ceased to be valid ... The Soviet government cannot also be indifferent to the fact that the consanguineous Ukrainians and Belarusians living on the territory of Poland, left to the mercy of fate, remain defenseless.

In view of this situation, the Soviet government ordered the High Command of the Red Army to order the troops to cross the border and take under their protection the lives and property of the population of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus.

Every word in this note is saturated with lies. The Polish government was in the town of Kutno near the Romanian border. As for Warsaw, the capital of Poland was captured by the Germans only on September 27th. However, in an effort to get help from the east as soon as possible, the Germans already on September 9 announced the capture of Warsaw. On this occasion, Molotov sent a congratulatory telegram to Ribbentrop: "I have received your message... Please convey my congratulations to the government of the German Empire. Molotov.

The news that Warsaw had not yet been taken cooled somewhat the warlike fervor in Moscow. Moscow began to look for an opportunity to present its intervention as plausible in the eyes of world public opinion, so as not to look like an aggressor. Molotov allegorically asked Ribbentrop whether Germany would be offended if we announced that we were bringing in troops to save the "half-brothers" of Ukrainians and Belarusians from the Germans. But in Berlin

offended. And they were not only offended, but also frankly nervous - the Polish group "Poznan" hanging over the unsecured flanks of the Germans threatened to disrupt the plans of the command, which was sure that the Soviet troops would hit the Poles immediately. To hell with them, with prepositions! Let's get started soon!

The negotiations between Berlin and Moscow are increasingly beginning to resemble a showdown on the "raspberry". Look, Berlin is threatening, if you don't intervene, you will be left "without a share". Our godfather ordered me to give it to your godfather. Of course, instead of a rude "don't care", the threat is clothed in the elegant text of another urgent telegram sent to Moscow on September 15: "If Russian intervention is not launched, the question will inevitably arise whether a German zone of influence will not be created in the area lying to the east, political vacuum... ...Conditions may arise in Eastern Poland for the formation of new states." (Come on, guys, hurry up, otherwise we will create an independent Ukrainian republic in Eastern Poland).

Berlin's hint is understood. Schulenburg urgently telegraphs to Berlin:

"Moscow. September 17, 1939.

Extremely urgent! Secret! Stalin, in the presence of Molotov and Voroshilov, received me at two in the morning and assured me that the Red Army would cross the Soviet-Polish border at six in the morning along its entire length ... "

As Stalin promised, at exactly 6 am on September 17, 1939, the Red Army crossed the border with the forces of two fronts—Ukrainian under the command of the infamous S. Timoshenko and Belorussian under the command of M. Kovalev. Poland all the way from Polotsk to Kamenetz-Podolsk, starting battles with a few Polish detachments covering the eastern border. The "Second Front" of the Second World War was opened.

The invasion of Soviet troops took the Polish command by surprise. Nobody understood what happened at first. What is this: the arrival of the allies shsh invasion? However, the answer to this question was given by Soviet bombs and shells that fell on the Polish positions. The directive of the commander of the Polish troops, Marshal Rydz-Shmygly, also played its role, ordering not to engage in battle with the Red Army and withdraw to the territory of Romania and Hungary.

The vast majority of combat-ready units were aimed at hitting the Germans. The Red Army was resisted mainly by parts of the border guard corps. Nevertheless, major battles unfolded near Grodno, Shatsk and Oran. Near Przemyśl, two infantry regiments were completely cut down by the lancers of General Vladislav Anders. Timoshenko managed to bring tanks into action, preventing the breakthrough of the Polish cavalry into the territory of the USSR.

The heroic garrison of the Brest (!) Fortress under the command of General Konstantin Plisovsky repelled all of Guderian's attacks. Guderian was nervous. Without heavy artillery, the Poles could not be smoked out of the fortress, and all the artillery was stuck near Warsaw. The Soviet heavy artillery of Krivoshein helped out, bombarding the fortress for two days continuously. Excited by the battle, the soldiers of Kovalev and Guderian hugged on the Tiraspol bridge across the Bug.

The units of the NKVD following the regular army, without wasting a second, began mass arrests in the captured cities and towns. All officers, priests, prominent representatives of the intelligentsia were subject to arrest. Not allowing them to come to their senses, they were herded into calf houses and sent to the east.

Stalin's campaign in Europe began.

On the occasion of the glorious victory, a grandiose military parade took place in Brest. To the militant sounds of the Brandenburg March, Soviet and German soldiers were printing a step. Taking the parade, General Heinz Guderian and brigade commander Semyon Krivoshein stood side by side on the podium.

"Friendship sealed in blood!" - Stalin will say later in a telegram to Hitler, and whoever knows Stalin will understand how he hated his overly ardent competitor if he spoke to him about friendship. The Red Army captured 240,000 Polish soldiers. Naturally, there was not enough transport, prisons and camps, so mass executions of prisoners of war immediately began. Mass graves - traces of our "liberation campaign" - were found near Grodno, in Oshmany, in Khodorovo, Molodechno, Sarny, Novogrudok, Rogatyn, Kossovo-Polesky, Volkovysk and many other places. Officially, their own losses were also announced: 737 killed, 1862 wounded. Total: 2599 people. (True losses amounted to 5327 people. Killed - 1386).

In some places, fighting was still going on, when the victors began to discuss the question of the future of the Polish lands. Hitler proposed the creation of a puppet Polish microstate on both sides of the demarcation line separating German and Soviet troops. However, Stalin immediately saw in this another cowardly attempt by Hitler to extricate himself from the war with the West. He did not want to hear about the preservation of any traces of Polish statehood. This frustrated his plan, giving Germany a theoretical opportunity to get out of the war.

On September 25, Schulenburg telegraphs to Berlin:

"Stalin declared: in the final settlement of the Polish question, everything should be avoided that in the future could cause a clash between Germany and the Soviet Union. From this point of view, he considers it wrong to leave an independent Polish state. He proposes the following solution: from the territories to the east of the demarcation line, the entire Lublin Voivodeship and the part of the Warsaw Voivodeship that extends to the Bug should be attached to our part. In return, we must abandon our claims to Lithuania ... "

There was a quick reply from Berlin that the Fuehrer had changed his original opinion and considered Stalin's point of view more realistic. (Intelligence reported to him that the British did not want to listen to anything until the German troops left the line that existed before September 1). If so, then Stalin is right again. So it's time to clarify the "division of spheres of influence", as the secret protocol to the treaty of August 23 diplomatically called the seizure of foreign territories. The time has come to refine these formulations.

On September 27, 1939, Pravda reported: "At the invitation of the government of the USSR, September 27 of this year. German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop is arriving in Moscow to discuss with the government of the USSR issues related to the events in Poland.

At 1800 Ribbentrop's plane landed at the Moscow airport. The wary looks that he received on August 23 were gone. Molotov met him as an old friend. However, when Ribbentrop arrived at the embassy, he was in for a small but not very pleasant surprise. Schulenburg handed his boss two telegrams. These were messages sent from Berlin by the German envoy in Tallinn, who said that the Estonian government had informed him of a Soviet ultimatum demanding "under the threat of an immediate invasion" to provide the USSR with naval and air bases on Estonian territory, as well as to station a Soviet military contingent there. fifty thousand people. A similar ultimatum was issued



the government of Latvia.

In a somewhat preoccupied mood, the Reich Minister went to meet with Stalin.

In a relaxed atmosphere of friendly conversation and jokes, a new Soviet-German treaty was signed, called the Treaty of Friendship and Border. The treaty was short and consisted of only four articles:

"Article I. The Government of the USSR and the German Government establish r as the boundary between mutual state interests on the territory of the former Polish state, a line that is marked on the map attached to this and will be described in more detail in an additional protocol.

Article II Both parties recognize the boundary of mutual state interests established in Article I as final and eliminate any interference of third powers in this decision.

Article III. The necessary state reorganization in the territory to the west of the line indicated in the article is carried out by the German government, in the territory to the east of this line - by the government of the USSR.

Article IV The government of the USSR and the German government consider the above reorganization as a reliable foundation for the further development of friendly relations between their peoples.

On the secret map attached to the treaty, the demarcation line of the fourth partition of Poland was carefully drawn, with the amendments that Stalin personally made, ceding the hunting grounds to Ribbentrop (let him settle down, then we will select and give it to Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov, and we will make Ribbentrop a huntsman). Accordingly, Stalin had to sign the card twice. For the second time, his dashing stroke from the territory of Western Belarus cut through Ukraine and left for Romania.

Before leaving Moscow, the touched Ribbentrop gave an interview to a TASS correspondent, noting the following points:

- "1. German-Soviet friendship is now finally established.
2. Both sides will never allow third powers to interfere in Eastern European issues.
3. Both states want peace to be restored and that England and France stop the absolutely senseless and hopeless struggle against Germany.
4. If, however, warmongers take over in these countries, then Germany and the USSR will know how to respond to this.

The Minister went on to point to the agreement reached between Germany and the USSR on an extensive economic program that would benefit both powers. Herr von Ribbentrop concluded by saying:

"The talks took place in a particularly friendly and excellent atmosphere. However, first of all, I would like to note the extremely cordial reception extended to me by the Soviet government and especially by Messrs. Stalin and Molotov.

Stalin was pleased. The lands included in the USSR as a result of the defeat and partition of Poland totaled about 200 thousand square meters. kilometers with a population of 13.4 million Human.

The reduction of the newly acquired territories to the all-Union denominator began immediately. Local departments of the NKVD received a secret order from the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs N 001223 dated October 1, 1939, according to which it was necessary to organize an urgent registration of "counter-revolutionary elements and enemy categories of the population" regardless of whether they participated in anti-Soviet activities. Quickly drawn up lists included not only former members of the Polish army, gendarmerie and police, but also employees of state institutions, public and religious figures, members of Ukrainian, Belarusian and Polish cultural and even sports societies. According to these lists, the mass deportation of the population to Siberia began. The number of deportees quickly exceeded one and a half million people. (The Germans managed to evict only 462,820 people from their territory.) It is not surprising that the "liberated half-brothers" immediately took up arms and fought the Soviet invaders right up to the end of the 50s, until their leader Stepan Bandera was killed by KGB agents in Munich, and they themselves were almost completely exterminated, having lost more than 3.5 million people killed and tortured in Stalin's camps, counting only Western Ukrainians.

The cession to Hitler of part of the Polish lands of the Warsaw and Lublin Voivodeships in exchange for Lithuania was not just a generous whim of a tyrant, but a carefully thought-out action. As a result, two ledges-balconies appeared on the map - Bialystok and Lvov, menacingly hanging over German territory and creating a threat of an instant encirclement of the Nazi troops east of the Oder and a swift, dagger strike on Berlin. And the acquisition (so far conditional) of Lithuania deprived the Germans of the opportunity to hang menacingly over our right flank as well.

"These

ledges, - commander of the 1st rank Shaposhnikov allowed himself to notice, -

will hang like clouds over Hitler. The leader carefully looked at his favorite and said: "And from

These clouds will be hit by a thunderstorm. Maybe Stalin wanted to say "thunder will strike", but, apparently, not knowing Russian very well, he said just that -

"a thunderstorm will strike." After all, thunder is only part of a thunderstorm, so that Stalin, as always carefully weighing his words, this time knew what he was saying.

Thus was born Operation Thunderstorm, which Stalin had been thinking about since 1934. Its operational development began only in mid-October 1939. Needless to say, the operation was top secret. Its preamble was simple, like everything ingenious: taking advantage of Hitler's war with Western democracies to seize Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Turkish straits, and, if possible, Germany itself. For this purpose, render all possible assistance to Hitler in the fight against his powerful opponents, frustrating any attempts at a peaceful settlement of the outbreak of war. It was the first option.

I must say that for the time being, Stalin was not afraid of Germany at all, but was afraid of France. It is understandable - the leader was a man of his time and all his judgments were formed during the First World War. He was convinced that any "crusade" against the USSR would be led by France. That is why the first version of Operation Thunderstorm looks so truncated, since behind the Maginot Line was the French army, which Stalin considered the strongest in Europe. As soon as the French recapture the Ruhr, the leader pointed out, we must begin here too.

The Germans, bogged down in the defense of the Ruhr area, will be able to leave only negligible forces in the east. We are restoring order in Eastern Europe, seizing the rest of Poland and East Germany, connecting with the French somewhere on the Elbe.

Those initiated into the plan of the leader, and there were five of them - Molotov, Beria, Shaposhnikov, Meretskov and partly Zhdanov - were fascinated silent.

Stalin lived through Operation Thunderstorm. Any of his steps in domestic and foreign policy in the period 1939 - 1941. it is impossible to understand correctly without taking into account the "Thunderstorm". Stalin was the most aggressive of all politicians of his time, and not just more insidious than Hitler or Mussolini. Both of the latter were highly adventurous. Stalin did not like adventures. He calculated everything carefully.

In the meantime, without wasting time, it is necessary to seize what was managed to negotiate with the Germans: the Baltic states and Finland. However, if the Latvians and Estonians were relatively easy to impose "allied" treaties, the essence of which was the deployment of fifty thousand contingents of Soviet troops on their territory, the Lithuanians and Finns turned out to be more stubborn, frankly stating to Molotov that the "treaties" proposed by the Soviet Union were nothing more than occupation.

The Lithuanians were treated more cunningly. Having summoned Lithuanian Foreign Minister Juozas Urbšis to Moscow, he was offered to include Vilnius and the Vilnius region, previously torn from Lithuania by Poland and captured by the Red Army during the "liberation" September campaign, into Lithuania. The second clause of the agreement was, again, Lithuania's consent to the deployment of Red Army garrisons in all key strategic centers of the republic, as well as the provision of naval and air bases to the USSR on its territory.

Realizing perfectly well that the fate of his country had already been decided by the German-Soviet pact, Urbšys yielded only under the direct threat of an immediate invasion.

The Finns behaved even worse. They did not even want to hear about the "peaceful" Soviet proposals to send troops to Finnish territory to ensure their own security, brazenly declaring that they were able to do it themselves.

Stalin began to lose patience, and this never ended well for anyone. The Finns were offered a new option: they cede the Karelian Isthmus, the Åland Islands and the Hanko Peninsula to the USSR, and in return receive twice the territory in Soviet Karelia. However, the Finns again refused, apparently not assuming that back in June the headquarters of the Leningrad Military District had developed a plan for their occupation. Irritated, Stalin ordered to prepare for the invasion of Finland within a month.

A new term "White Finns" appeared in Soviet newspapers and stories about what a villain "the commander of the Finnish microarmy Mannerheim, who before the revolution dared to be a tsarist general, stole the banner of the Cavalier Guard regiment in which he served, and still did not shoot himself from shame."

Soon in Paris, the creation of a Polish government-in-exile headed by General Sikorski was announced. It was generally funny, and therefore the Soviet government reacted to this joke of Western democracies with a feuilleton in Pravda on October 14, making it clear that it understands and appreciates humor.

But it was good for Stalin to frolic, honing the operational art of his general staff officers by planning Operation Thunderstorm, occupying the Baltic republics without firing a shot and mocking the Anglo-French aggressors with the help of newspaper feuilletons and cartoons, who started a war with Germany under the false slogan of fighting for democracy. He himself enjoyed the state of "outside the war", into which he so deftly dragged his new friend Hitler. But Hitler was not laughing. Remembering the Verdun and other meat grinders of the Western Front of the last war, he was nervous, probed the possibilities

peaceful settlement, but in response only arrogant British memorandums were received that peace was impossible until the final "destruction of Hitlerism as an ideology." In addition, the war was going on, and if on land it really deserved the name "strange", then at sea it immediately took on a fierce character.

A few hours before the start of the war, the largest German liner, the Bremen, once wearing the Blue Ribbon of the Atlantic, left New York. There were no passengers on board the ship. The pale faces of the sailors spoke clearly of their understanding that they were going to certain death. There is no escape from the English on the high seas, and few knew this truth better than the Germans.

The Bremen left New York and disappeared without a trace. Detachments of English ships combed the ocean to intercept and destroy the Bremen. Indeed, in wartime, the owner of the "Blue Ribbon" with a displacement of 50 thousand tons could transfer entire armies to any distance at a 28-knot speed, being an invaluable vehicle for the Wehrmacht. But the huge liner seemed to have vanished into thin air.

But the reality turned out to be much more intriguing: the Bremen, having left New York, turned sharply to the north and, keeping almost to the edge of the pack ice, calmly came to Murmansk. On September 4, the prearranged signal "AO-13" was transmitted to all German ships in the Atlantic from Raeder's headquarters, which meant: "Proceed to Murmansk, adhering to the northern course as much as possible." The British expected anything, but not this, and missed 36 largest enemy transports that had taken refuge in the Kola Bay, among which were such world-famous passenger liners as New York, Schwaben, Stuttgart, Cordillera, "Saint Louis", a lot of timber trucks, tankers and high-speed refrigerators.

The Murmansk authorities, although they had been warned by Moscow, looked with amazement at dozens of ships under the Nazi flags suddenly appearing in our Arctic waters, over which the bulk of the Bremen reigned supreme.

The "particularly friendly and splendid atmosphere," which Ribbentrop remarked about his visit to Moscow, immediately spread to Murmansk. The crews of all German ships were given the right to go ashore without hindrance, the sealed-up photo and film equipment were returned to their owners, and the powerful Bremen radio station was allowed to maintain constant contact with Germany.

At the same time, a stream of a wide variety of goods poured into Germany from the Soviet Union, providing Nazi Germany with almost everything that she could dream of - from non-ferrous metals and fuel, wheat and cotton to the transit of strategic raw materials from Japan and China through Soviet territory: rubber, oils, precious woods, etc.

The British blockade, with which London hoped to strangle the Reich by the spring of 1940, turned out to be completely ineffective. Germany and its armed forces, so generously fed from the USSR, were gaining strength every day. Battleships were completed, the tank program expanded, ammunition and all types of strategic raw materials were accumulated. Stalin rubbed his hands with satisfaction. Only those historians who cannot or do not want to investigate the true reasons for such a policy of Stalin prefer to follow the line of least resistance, calling this policy the "criminal political myopia" of the leader of all peoples.

Of course, Stalin's disruption of the economic blockade of Germany, his rescue of the invaluable cargo tonnage of the German fleet, and, finally, the creation of a German naval base on Soviet soil - all this at first glance is difficult to explain, since, being directed against Great Britain, it also boomeranged the USSR. But only for the first

sight!

All this was an integral part of Operation Thunderstorm: to prevent the British from winning a quick victory at sea, to make the war irreversible, to weaken the English fleet as much as possible by German hands, to allow the European war to flare up.

Hitler's withdrawal from the war could lead to an alliance of European powers and to that notorious "crusade" against the USSR, of the inevitability of which Stalin, convincing everyone, convinced himself. And Europe, occupied with the war, among other things, in Stalin's opinion, could not react in any way to "certain measures of a foreign policy nature" that Stalin had outlined for the near future.

October 31 Molotov speaks at the extraordinary fifth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR with a report "On the foreign policy of the Soviet Union." Molotov attacks England and France as aggressors, passionately and clearly explaining his idea:

"... England and France, who only yesterday stood up against aggression, stand for the continuation of the war ... The attempts of the British and French governments to justify this new position of theirs by the obligations given to Poland, of course, are clearly untenable. The restoration of old Poland, as everyone understands, is out of the question. Therefore, it is pointless to continue the current war under the banner of the restoration of the former Polish state. Realizing this, the governments of Britain and France, however, do not want an end to the war and the restoration of peace, but are looking for a new justification for continuing the war against Germany. Recently, the ruling circles of England and France have been trying to portray themselves as fighters for the democratic rights of the peoples against Hitlerism, and the British government has declared that for it the aim of the war against Germany is nothing more and nothing less than the "destruction of Hitlerism." It turns out that the British, and with them the French supporters of the war, declared against Germany something like an "ideological war", reminiscent of the old religious wars.

But this kind of war has no justification for itself.

The ideology of Hitlerism, like any other ideological system, can be recognized or denied, this is a matter of political views. But any person will understand that ideology cannot be destroyed by force, it cannot be ended by war. Therefore, it is not only senseless, but also criminal to wage such a war as the war for the "destruction of Hitlerism" under the false flag of the struggle for "democracy".

Having thus characterized the foreign policy situation and clearly letting Germany know that she was not afraid of anything and continued her "just" cause, the head of the Soviet government and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs turned, so to speak, to questions of domestic policy. Having listed the rich trophies taken by the Red Army during the September campaign in Poland (more than 900 guns, over 10,000 machine guns, 300 aircraft, 300,000 rifles, etc.) European state", Molotov turned to the Baltic problem. Referring to the recent conclusion between the USSR and the three Baltic republics of mutual assistance pacts, Molotov, quickly switching to "novorech", said:

"The creation of Soviet bases and airfields on the territory of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the introduction of a certain number of Red Army units to guard these bases and airfields provide a reliable defense support not only for the Soviet Union, but also for the Baltic states themselves ... The special nature of these mutual assistance pacts is by no means does not mean any interference of the Soviet Union in the affairs of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as

This is what some organs of the foreign press are trying to depict.

But open irritation begins to sound in Molotov's voice - he moves on to the ugly behavior of Finland, with which it was not possible to conclude a similar agreement, since the Finns refused the voluntary occupation of their small but proud country by the Soviet Union.

"Our relations with Finland are in a special position," Molotov announces harshly, ominously sparkling pince-nez glasses. "This is mainly due to the fact that various kinds of external influences from third powers are more affecting in Finland."

Well, good: if the Finns do not want to conclude a "mutually beneficial" agreement with us, this is their business. But they do not want to meet the more than modest claims of the Soviet Union, which only asks to cede to it half of the Finnish territory, and at the same time to disarm. Then Molotov, according to a well-established methodology, begins to list the demands of the Soviet Union by their furious denial:

"There is hardly any reason to dwell on those tales that are being spread by the foreign press about the proposals of the Soviet Union in negotiations with Finland. One claims that the USSR "demands" the city of Viipuri (Vyborg) and the northern part of Lake Ladoga. Let's say from ourselves - this is pure fiction and a lie. Others argue that the USSR "demands" the transfer of the Åland Islands to it. This is the same fiction and lie!"

Here Molotov was already speaking almost the truth. This is not about any territorial concessions on the part of the Finns, but about the capture of all of Finland in a very original way, which they intend to announce with the start of the invasion. An open threat against Finland is almost no longer hidden behind ornate turns of speech:

"After all this, we do not think that Finland will begin to look for a reason to disrupt the proposed agreement. This would not be in line with the policy of friendly Soviet-Finnish relations and, of course, would cause serious damage to Finland itself. We are sure that ... Finnish leaders will not succumb to any anti-Soviet pressure and incitement of anyone.

However, Molotov himself no longer believed that the Finns could be intimidated. "Apparently, we will have to fight with Finland," Stalin said, and he never wasted words. So it happened this time.

### Chapter 3

On November 26, 1939, in the period from 15:45 to 16:05, seven shells exploded at the location of a Soviet military unit located one kilometer northwest of the village of Mainila near the Finnish border (on the Vyborg highway). One junior commander and three Red Army soldiers were killed, eight people were wounded. Although the shelling began quite unexpectedly, many managed to notice that the shells were coming from the south, from their own rear. However, the commission that arrived instantly (at 17:10), having examined the scene, came to the conclusion that the shelling was carried out from Finnish territory. The stunned soldiers responded confusedly, while the commanders quickly realized what they wanted from them. The questions were too suggestive. Of course, there was no investigation. However, the participants of the event unanimously

they say that the shelling was carried out by a special NKVD team that arrived on the Karelian Isthmus from Leningrad. A team of 15 people had one horse-drawn gun at their disposal. The group was commanded by NKVD Major Okunevich. Okunevich himself said that they were sent to the Karelian Isthmus with the order to "test the action of a secret projectile", indicating the exact location of the shooting, direction and goniometer. The team was accompanied by two "ballistics" specialists.

On the same day, without even waiting for the results of the fictitious investigation of the incident, Molotov called the envoy of Finland A. Ieren-Koskinen, handed him a note from the USSR government about the provocative shelling of Soviet troops from the territory of Finland. The note blamed the Finnish government for the incident and demanded that Finnish troops be removed 20-25 km from the border. In a reply note, on 27 November, the Finnish government stated that the Finnish border guards observed shell explosions and "based on the calculation of the speed of sound propagation from seven shots, it could be concluded that the guns from which these shots were fired

"were located at a distance of one and a half to two kilometers to the south-east from the place where the shells burst."

The Government of Finland proposed that "the frontier commissioners of both parties on the Karelian Isthmus be entrusted with jointly investigating this incident in accordance with the Convention on frontier commissioners concluded on September 24, 1928." The delicate Finns hinted that the incident was due to a "mistake" in the Red Army exercises. But any military man is well aware that shell fragments scatter in an ellipse extended in the direction of the projectile, so it is very easy to see where the fire was coming from. Naturally, Moscow did not want to hear anything about any investigation.

In a new note, on November 28, Molotov announced that the Soviet government "from this date considers itself free from the obligations assumed by virtue of the non-aggression pact .." The next day, all Soviet political and trade representatives were recalled from Finland.

At dawn on November 30, 1939, an outfit consisting of fighters Gorbunov, Lebedev and Snisar came out from outpost No. 19 of the Sestroretsk detachment of the Leningrad border district to guard the State border. The squad leader was the squad leader Minenko. The outfit was sent to guard the railway bridge across the Sestra River near Beloostrov, the only bridge connecting the USSR and Finland. At 6 o'clock in the morning, the head of the outpost, Lieutenant Suslov, approached the border guards, reminding the soldiers of the order of the head of the Sestroretsk detachment, Major Andreev. Two hours of tedious waiting passed. At 07.55 Lieutenant Suslov coughed loudly. This was the signal to attack. The soldiers, throwing grenades on the run and shooting at the Finnish border guards, rushed to the bridge. After a short fight, the bridge was captured. Minenko managed to cut the wire leading to the explosives under the bridge. The whole operation took about three minutes. Tanks were already moving towards the bridge.

Exactly at 0800, the long-range guns of the forts of Kronstadt, together with the ships of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, approaching the Finnish coast and batteries of corps and divisional artillery, began shelling the territory of Finland. At the same time, in complete darkness, warships and landing transports approached the island of Suur-Saari (Gogland) in the center of the Gulf of Finland. At 0800, naval artillery began bombarding the island, under the cover of which the paratroopers launched an assault. At the same time, powerful formations of bombers began to bomb the residential areas of Helsinki, Kotka, Viipuri and other cities in Finland.

"Columns of fire and smoke, fires, panic among the enemies accompanied the raid of the Stalinist



falcons," the Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper will write about this war crime without a shadow of shame. And all over the territory of the USSR, "spontaneous rallies" are already making noise. "Let's strike mercilessly at the enemy!" - demanded by the workers of the Bolshevik plant in Leningrad. "We will answer fire with fire!" - Labor Moscow is raging. "Let's wipe the Finnish adventurers off the face of the earth!" - the workers of Kyiv blaze with anger.

Such a reaction during the attack of the most gigantic empire in the world on a tiny country, better than any other example, shows that Russian society, defeated by the total Five Hundred Years' War, has already been brought by the thoughtful policy of the winners - the Communist Party and "personally comrade Stalin" - to the state of a completely pliable herd, fit for , in the apt expression of Kant, only for sacrifice.

The world had not yet recovered from the shock caused by the attack of the world's largest country on one of the smallest, when Stalin impressed everyone even more by demonstrating a new, elegant way to turn the most monstrous aggression into something sublimely just. On the day of the invasion, i.e. On November 30, the Pravda newspaper published the "Appeal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Finland to the working people of Finland", which, allegedly on behalf of the Finnish communists, contained a call for the immediate overthrow of the "bankrupt government gang", "executioners of the people and their henchmen". True, the Appeal stipulated that its authors were against the immediate organization of Soviet power in Finland and its annexation to the USSR. So far, only some vague "democratic reforms" and the conclusion of a mutual assistance pact with the USSR have been proposed - the same pact that the USSR so persistently tried to impose on the Finns after clarifying spheres of influence with Mr. von Ribbentrop.

But that was only the beginning. The next day, December 1, with an intriguing detective reference to "radio interception", Pravda published a report that in the Finnish city of Gerioki (Zelenogorsk), which had just been captured by the Red Army, a new government of "Democratic Finland" was formed, headed by an old Cominternist Otto Kuusinen, who also took over the portfolio of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. No one knew who the other six ministers were, but no one cared. On the same day, the "head of the government", no longer a "comrade", but Mr. O. Kuusinen appealed, as it should be, to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR with a request to recognize his government. MI Kalinin, of course, could not refuse his old friend and colleague.

The next day, talks were held in Moscow between the "heads of government" of the USSR and Finland. All of their own gathered: Stalin, Kuusinen, Molotov, Zhdanov, Voroshilov, and without unnecessary delay signed an agreement on mutual assistance and friendship. Stalin gave Kuusinen 70 thousand square kilometers of Soviet Karelia with the entire population, and Kuusinen sold the Karelian Isthmus to Stalin for 120 million Finnish marks, the islands in the bay and part of the Sredny Rybachy Peninsula for 300 million marks. In addition, at a reasonable price, Kuusinen agreed to lease the Hanko peninsula.

The agreement with Kuusinen came into force from the moment of signing, but was subject to ratification. The exchange of instruments of ratification was to take place "in

perhaps a shorter period in the capital of Finland - the city of Helsinki. However, there was no information that the Finnish people responded to the call of the Pravda newspaper and began to overthrow the hated government.

There was just the opposite information that all the Finns, as one, including the communists, took up arms to defend the freedom and independence of their homeland and repulse the arrogant and basely provoked invasion. And although such a reaction of the Finns did not frighten anyone in the Kremlin, it forced "Mr." Kuusinen to ask the USSR for "international assistance" in a special declaration.

In Leningrad, the first corps of the people's army of Democratic Finland, called "Ingermanland", is being formed. There is no time to sew a uniform for this corps, but a very original way out of the situation was found. From Bialystok, where the Polish military warehouses were captured, tens of thousands of sets of uniforms of the Polish army were urgently delivered to Leningrad. They wrangled the insignia, dressed up the "Ingrian" in this uniform, who, in famously broken "confederates", bravely marched through Leningrad ... and no one else heard about them.

Stalin planned a war with the Finns along the lines of the German "blitzkrieg" in Poland. But, alas, he did not have an ally who would help him by opening a second front. It didn't seem necessary. Six Soviet armies, numbering more than a million people, supported by tanks and artillery, having absolute superiority at sea and in the air, invaded a country whose army, even with total mobilization, could not exceed three hundred thousand people and had practically no tanks or aircraft.

One could not doubt a quick victory. But nothing of the sort happened.

The Red Army was immediately drawn into fierce battles, showing itself in them as a poorly trained, poorly armed and virtually uncontrollable crowd. In forty-degree frosts, the army began hostilities, having neither sheepskin coats, nor felt boots, nor skis, on which, by the way, no one knew how to walk. Mobile detachments of Finnish skiers, having blocked the few roads of the Karelian Isthmus with blockages and mines, quickly paralyzed the movement of a huge, uncontrollable crowd and, boldly maneuvering along the snowy impassability, began to exterminate the enemy.

In the very first days of the aggression, it became clear that there was no interaction at all between the combat arms. Armadas of Soviet aviation did not have any means of interaction with the ground forces at all and aimlessly plied the Finnish sky, unable to help their bleeding and freezing infantry. Conceived by the fleet - also without any connection with the ground forces - spectacular improvisations could not lead to anything good either. The ships tore their hulls against the ice of the Gulf of Finland, were blown up by mines, constantly losing artillery duels with incredibly well-aimed Finnish coastal batteries. With difficulty, the tugboats dragged the brand new cruiser "Kirov", beaten by Finnish shells, to Libau.

An incredible patriotic upsurge embraced all sectors of Finnish society. The trick, undertaken by Stalin with the help of his Comintern gang, led to completely opposite results. The working class of Finland, having learned about the "government" of Kuusinen, will publish a response message, which, in particular, said:

"The Finnish working class sincerely desires peace. But since the aggressors do not consider his will for peace, the working class of Finland has no alternative but to fight with arms in hand against aggression ... "

Former soldiers of the Red Guard - participants in the Finnish revolution of 1918 - collectively appealed to the Minister of Defense with a request to enroll them in the Finnish armed forces for a common rebuff to the enemy. The "spirit of the winter war" entered the history of small Finland forever as a synonym for the unity and heroism of the people in the struggle for their freedom and independence.

But it is unlikely that Finnish patriotism could shake anyone in the Kremlin. After all, Polish patriotism was no less. I was shocked by something else - the incredibly high combat training of the small Finnish army. Old Russian Guardsman General Mannerheim

- the general of the retinue of the last Russian Sovereign brutally murdered by the Bolsheviks - knew his job. Finnish skiers dressed in camouflage coats rushed like ghosts through the forests of the Karelian Isthmus, sowing death, panic, superstitious rumors among the stunned soldiers of the Red Army. The Finnish artillery was surprisingly accurate. A few Finnish pilots, reinforced by Swedish and Norwegian volunteers, valiantly engaged in battle with the air armadas of the "Stalin's falcons", constantly winning victories in air duels.

Two months before the war, at a meeting of the Military Council, Voroshilov smashed the plan of Shaposhnikov, who took the Mannerheim line very seriously and highly appreciated the combat training of the Finnish army. Shaposhnikov believed that the war would be long and that the offensive was impossible without the preliminary destruction of the concrete defensive structures of the Finns by artillery and aircraft. In the meantime, Shaposhnikov believed, the army should have been prepared for war in the harsh northern winter: put on skis, put on winter uniforms, and engage in individual combat training for each soldier. Voroshilov accused Shaposhnikov, whom he could not stand, of defeatism, overestimation of the petty-bourgeois enemy and underestimation of the capabilities of the Red Army, who knew how to fight like a Bolshevik. On the Karelian Isthmus, Voroshilov argued, there were enough roads to do without skis, and the whole war would take no more than two weeks - they would do without winter uniforms.

But as it turned out, not everyone even had overcoats. Nobody knew how to shoot properly. Not all battalion commanders knew how to read maps. Communication was primitive and immediately failed. Any Finnish schoolgirl shot better than the famous "Voroshilov shooters". There were no camouflage suits in the units - they urgently began to be sewn at all factories in Leningrad. The first ski part was formed from students of the Institute. Lesgaft.

The Finns amazed with the accuracy of their shooting. Those who fought in this terrible war for the rest of their lives remembered the "cuckoos" - Finnish snipers, as a rule, from among the civilian population - hiding on the tops of trees and not allowing whole battalions to raise their heads. For downed "cuckoos" without talking they gave the Order of the Red Banner, and even the Hero. Siberian professional hunters were urgently mobilized into the army along with their huskies, with whom they hunted for squirrel and sable. Their main task was to fight the "cuckoos". They hit the cuckoos with guns, bombed the forest, set it on fire, because the cuckoo did not even let anyone lean out of the shelter. When the "cuckoo" was destroyed, very often it turned out to be a Finnish old woman sitting on a tree with a bag of crackers and a bag of cartridges.

Everything that could be mined was mined. The sappers did not know the secrets of Finnish mines. The local population left up to one person from the abandoned settlements. For two hours, Soviet troops could not enter Terioki, abandoned by the Finns - a machine gun fired from the bell tower of the Orthodox Cathedral. In the end, the bell tower was shot down by artillery. The machine gunner turned out to be the eighteen-year-old daughter of a Russian Orthodox priest. And still no one honors the name of this heroine.

Two weeks of the war have already passed, but the Red Army, despite its overwhelming superiority, has not yet managed everywhere to overcome the foreground separating the Soviet border from the Mannerheim Line. From the eastern direction, where an excellent option was created on the map with one dagger blow from Suomussalmi towards the Gulf of Bothnia to cut the territory of Finland in half and go to the rear of the Mannerheim line, it was not possible to advance a single step at all. The huge 9th Army under the command of General Vinogradov, supported by hundreds of tanks and aircraft, referring to the lack of roads, all grouped, regrouped, but could not overturn the two Finnish divisions opposing it. General Vinogradov was made quite clear that if he did not complete his victorious offensive towards the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia by

December 21 - the sixtieth birthday of Comrade Stalin - the great leader may doubt his boundless devotion.

By this time, the Soviet Union had already been driven out of the League of Nations as an aggressor in disgrace. The sympathies of the whole world were on the side of Finland. Intelligence had long ago reported to Stalin that the British were preparing a landing in Norway in order to send their troops and aircraft to help the Finns.

Stalin's plan was frustrated, to the fulfillment of which he devoted all his energy and for the sake of which he was ready to sacrifice everything. There was a quite obvious counter-variant: Hitler negotiated with the West, and together they, taking advantage of the fact that Stalin was bogged down in the Finnish war, would strike, organize the very crusade that he had been so afraid of since the civil war.

On November 8, the Fuhrer miraculously escaped death. On this day, according to tradition, Hitler met with veterans of his movement in the largest beer hall in Munich to mark the next anniversary of the famous "Beer Putsch" of 1923 - an unsuccessful attempt by the Nazis to seize power, which ended for Hitler in prison, where he, after spending more than a year, wrote his famous book *Mein Kampf*.

This time Hitler's speech was shorter than usual. Having attacked with furious attacks on England, which so lightheartedly ignited the European war and stubbornly refuses to change its mind in order to turn from war to peace, Hitler left the hall with his retinue at the beginning of the tenth evening, leaving the veterans to enjoy the impression of his speech. Twenty minutes after the Fuhrer's departure, a bomb exploded in the beer hall, planted in a column behind the podium from which the Fuhrer spoke. Seven people were killed and 63 were wounded. Officially, no one claimed responsibility for this terrorist act.

The Germans, of course, blamed British intelligence for everything. The British, in turn, said that the explosion was a provocation by the Gestapo, the purpose of which is quite obvious: to increase Hitler's popularity, and at the same time to eliminate all the annoying veterans of the party, who were always grumbling about the fact that "Adolf betrayed the workers' movement."

On December 12, a new misfortune fell upon Hitler: the British intercepted the German "pocket" battleship *Graf Spee* in the South Atlantic and, after a short battle, drove it to Montevideo. And although only two cruisers fought on the part of the British, the frightened Germans blew up their ship.

All this did nothing to raise Hitler's morale.

The British clearly made it clear that at sea, as always, they were the masters. The English noose already cuts the throat, despite the flow of goods from the USSR. What if there was no flow? The Reich would have been finished by now.

On the Karelian Isthmus, battles were in full swing along the entire length of the Mannerheim Line. Wave after wave of Soviet infantry, supported by artillery fire and tanks, went on the assault.

But it was not possible to break through or even wedge into the defense of the Finns in any sector. The army bled to death and rolled back to their original positions. And, as if that were not enough, terrible news came from the Karelian front - the Finns surrounded the 9th Army and part of the 8th Army. More than 50 thousand people turned out to be in the cauldron. It's impossible to get through to them. Their supplies are running out. In such terrible frosts, they will inevitably face death or surrender ...

Such was the gift for Stalin's 60th birthday, which was splendidly celebrated in Moscow on December 21st. Published on this occasion in sixteen pages

"Pravda", of course, was all devoted to describing the great deeds of the greatest Leader. The newspaper opened with a huge article by Molotov "Stalin - the successor of Lenin's work."

The year 1939 ends. In an ominous silence and strange inaction, the German and Anglo-French armies froze in the west. Silence also reigned along the Mannerheim Line. Soviet troops are waiting for reinforcements. In the snows of Karelia, the 9th Army, surrounded by the Finns, is fighting with its last strength. They try to supply it with the help of an air bridge, but no one knows the location of the army in huge forests, and most of the cargo dropped by parachute falls into the hands of the Finns. All attempts to break through to the cut off parts and release them lead to new huge losses, but they do not give any result. And finally, it becomes quite obvious that the 9th Army has been destroyed.

According to the most conservative estimates, more than 30 thousand people were killed and died of frostbite. About 10 thousand were missing. About two thousand were taken prisoner in a half-dead state. The Finns solemnly bury their soldiers who died in the "battle of Suomosalmi". All of them are known by name. There are 903 of them. Volleys of funeral fireworks thunder. The expanses of practically unprotected Soviet Karelia are open to the Finns.

But the strength of the small country is fading. The army is overworked. Despite the sympathies of the whole world, no one provides the Finns with effective assistance. The Germans cannot do this, bound by a treaty of friendship with Moscow. The British give crumbs - 75 anti-tank guns, 200 machine guns and vague promises to come to the rescue.

If Stalin does not want to fight England at all, then the British do not want to fight Stalin either. Deep psychologists - they firmly believe in their forecast: in such a small area as Europe, there is no place for two such large predators as Hitler and Stalin - they will inevitably grapple with each other - this, the British are sure, is a matter of the near future. And then, with the feasible participation of the rest of the world, they themselves will destroy each other.

British intelligence still knows nothing about Operation Thunderstorm, but the Bialystok and Lvov balconies lovingly fashioned by Stalin speak for themselves. Too clearly both ski jumps are aimed at Berlin. They also disturb Hitler. He hesitates to advance in the West, not daring to turn his back on his new friend, frozen in such an unambiguous pose. The General Staff reassure the Fuhrer. Until spring, the Russians are stuck on the Karelian Isthmus - this is quite obvious. And there they will need time to recover from such an unexpectedly difficult war. Already, the Abwehr estimates the losses of the Russians - at least a hundred thousand people. And the war is not only not over, but, one might say, still and didn't start...

Attempts to take the Mannerheim line with a bang! have been discontinued. Serious preparations began for the offensive. New divisions and corps, tanks and artillery were brought in from all regions of the country. On the Karelian Isthmus, in addition to the 7th Army, another one was deployed - the 13th. The total number of troops concentrated against Finland already exceeded the entire adult population of this country capable of bearing arms. So much artillery was brought in that there was not enough space for it on the Karelian Isthmus - the guns stood wheel to wheel. Almost all combat-ready aviation was concentrated on the airfields of the LVO. The ships of the Baltic Fleet, immeasurably superior to the naval forces of the Finns, had to add their artillery power to the cause of the speedy defeat of the enemy.

But just as mediocre as on land, actions took place at sea. The huge Baltic Fleet was unable to fulfill any of the tasks assigned to it: to effectively support the coastal flank of the army and ensure the blockade of Finland. The only combat-ready Finnish submarines Vetehinen and Vesihisi, against which, apart from surface ships, more than fifty Soviet boats were deployed, felt at home in the theater of operations.

Meanwhile, serious preparations began to break through the Mannerheim Line.

The soldiers, finally, were dressed in sheepskin coats and felt boots, received frostbite ointments and vodka allowances - the so-called "People's Commissar's hundred grams."

Organizationally, the troops were brought together in the newly formed North-Western Front, commanded by the commander of the 1st rank Timoshenko, a man without any military education, who liked Stalin during the civil war with his physical strength, ruthlessness and stupidity. Under his leadership, they began to develop an operational breakthrough plan. However, the operational art of Commander Tymoshenko did not provide for anything new. The Mannerheim Line was to be stormed head-on.

As the Stalinist military machine stalled more and more on the Karelian Isthmus, relations between the USSR and France and England became more and more hostile. Congratulating its readers on the New Year, the Pravda newspaper of January 1, 1940 happily noted in an editorial:

"All the honest sons and daughters of England, France and America stigmatize the vile gang - from the Pope to the London shopkeepers, who raised all this wild howl about the noble help that the Red Army is giving to the Finnish people fighting against their oppressors."

A swarm of political officers from the PUR, who rushed to the front after their boss Mkhlis, explained to the soldiers and commanders that Finland had treacherously attacked the USSR, that this war was "international imperialism's reconnaissance in force" before the invasion of the USSR, that the Anglo-French financial magnates were ready to abandon against the world's first socialist state their vile hordes. It was no longer terrible that this shameful war was written and said in such terms, but that they believed in all this, and believed in fact unconditionally.

"We have created a new type of man – the Soviet man," Stalin will say with understandable pride, and Brezhnev will repeat the same thing with no less pride 40 years later.

But Stalin is nervous. Intelligence reports clearly show him how the public opinion of England, France and the Scandinavian countries actually reacted to his Finnish adventure. There is constant information about ongoing secret Anglo-German contacts, where not only the possibility of concluding peace is being exaggerated, but also a joint action against the USSR. In Oslo, the British residency, under the pretext of helping Finland, is conducting secret negotiations with the government of Norway on the passage of Anglo-French troops through its territory. And that means war with England. Don't want to at all. We are not yet ready to fight England.

Most recently, on November 28, 1939, in the city of Molotovsk, in an atmosphere of extreme secrecy, the third sixty-thousand-ton battleship of the "Soviet Union" type - "Soviet Belarus" was laid down. In February of this year, it is also planned to lay another one there. But while they are being built in an environment of rampant sabotage and sabotage...

Everyone is complaining about the lack of workers. He, Stalin, starting from 1937, gave the order to send one and a half million people to the Gulag annually, distributing them in accordance with the needs of the people's commissariats. Where are these people? Who organized their pestilence and general executions last year? Yezhov? But this pest and hireling have already been dealt with.

Someone reported to Stalin: several thousand people remained in the Lubyanka cellars after the execution of Yezhov. Many of them are extremely needed in science, industry, and the army. There are different writers, artists - these, of course, let them sit, but specialists would be nice

release, Comrade Stalin. They even gave me a list. He looked up and was horrified. Not from surnames, but from the names of the enterprises where they worked - entirely defense research institutes and factories. Called Lawrence. Clearly, it seems, he said: "Clean Yezhov's cellars." It seemed to understand. But on the same night, all the inhabitants of the Lubyanka basements were shot down to a single person - 7105 souls! Overnight. We worked with integrity! Don't say anything. Then for two months at night they were taken to some cemetery near the Donskoy Monastery. What should I do? I would not forgive another - I forgave Lawrence. Called, explained directly: stop the executions, We need working hands. People's Commissariats are complaining and the State Planning Commission too. I signed a distribution order for the next year - 1,700,000 people in the Gulag and not to release anyone from those who had served time. Give new! No, they say, don't act like that, Comrade Stalin. Give the second terms already in the wild - for newly discovered acts. It's nice when they argue with you in a Bolshevik way, on principle, as Lenin liked.

I remember that Felix Dzerzhinsky, having received a bribe in foreign currency, began to excuse the Grand Dukes who were sitting in the Peter and Paul Fortress from being shot. Lenin already soared. "What are you, old man," he attacked Felix. - Are you in your right mind, Felix Edmundovich! Shoot immediately! Every single one! This is paramount!" and looked Felix straight in the eyes. And the blue in them is simply heavenly, and the kindness is unearthly.

Felix nevertheless sent one of the princes abroad with his friend Gleb Boki. Painfully the bribe was big. They said that almost 400 thousand pounds. Exactly how much, no one knows. The money was transferred to a Swiss bank, but burned out. - Ilyich found out everything and was terribly upset. He sat like this at the table, clasping his bald head with his hands, and almost cried.

Felix was temporarily removed from the leadership of the Cheka, but then he forgave him. Was outgoing. But somehow, in the presence of Alexei Maksimovich Gorky, he said about Dzerzhinsky: "His face is like that of an ascetic, but a thief and a bribe taker." And he waved his hand. And so he, Stalin, is alone, like Lenin. No one understands him, everyone has to explain everything hundreds of times, especially on issues that are not supposed to be discussed at all. And here also the head swells from the need to analyze the incoming data. Where is the information, and where is the disinformation slipped by international imperialism?

Here Purkaev reports from Berlin that German intelligence received information about the upcoming British landing in Norway. The same information is given by our intelligence, but warns that this is a "misinformation" that came from England. If the British themselves spread disinformation about their landing, then why? Involve the Scandinavian countries in the war? But on which side? Of course, it is very important here that the British do not end up in Norway in any way. We need to cut them off from Finland. But how? On our own, it won't work. The Germans could, but it could end very badly for them. And it doesn't work for us...

Damn Finnish war!

January 17 Pravda bursts into a huge article about the insidious plans of England and France to violate the neutrality of Norway and Sweden in the most "vile" way

At the same time, Hitler discovers on his desktop a reissued pamphlet by Kaiser Vice-Admiral Wolfgang Wegener "Naval Strategy in the World War", from which it is clear that Germany lost the first world war only because it did not occupy Norway

Hitler himself can no longer figure out who is pushing him all the time towards Norway.

Maybe, indeed, we should get ahead of the British. The main thing is suddenness. The tiny (145,000 people) and poorly armed Norwegian army, of course, will not be able to threaten the Wehrmacht in any way. But the English?

On the same day, Hitler conferred with Raeder. It turns out that the Russians were allowed to concentrate part of the landing forces in Murmansk. Oh, this completely changes things! Here the British will not be able to react. Hitler immediately gives the directive to prepare for the capture of Norway.

Stalin liked him because he swallowed the bait with the frivolous swiftness of a hungry perch.

On February 3, four days late, the headquarters of the Northwestern Front, Commander Timoshenko, presented Stalin with a new plan to break through the Mannerheim Line.

In principle, the new plan was no different from the old one. Finnish fortifications were supposed to be stormed by a frontal attack. Timoshenko couldn't think of anything better, which is not surprising, because the commander of the map read the map tightly, having learned one phrase from the methods of commanding troops throughout the Five Hundred Years War: "I'll slap with my own hand," which was a slightly modernized cry of the fifteenth century - "with my sword I'll cut down", on the seventeenth - "I'll crush it with my own hands", on the nineteenth - "I'll stab it with my sword"!

On the same day, after powerful artillery preparation and air bombardment, the 7th and 13th armies, with their adjacent flanks, like a herd of buffaloes, went head-on to the Mannerheim line. The Red Infantry was supported, for the first time in the practice of the Red Army, by large tank formations. Using overwhelming superiority in people and equipment, the Soviet troops tried to break through the Finnish defenses with continuous attacks for three days. But everything was in vain - all attacks were broken against the unshakable stamina of the Finns. Wave after wave, as in December, the chains of the attackers bevelled, gasoline tanks burned like torches

Timoshenko, who had already fallen into despair, and Zhdanov, assigned to him, even planned to test military gases on the Mannerheim Line, and only the ugly state of anti-chemical protection in the Red Army forced them to suppress this temptation. With merciless orders, they continued to drive more and more masses of troops to the fortifications of the Finns. Artillery roared incessantly. Bombers were rising, trying to break the way for the infantry.

Finally, after four days of bloody fighting, having suffered huge losses, our army broke through the first strip of the Mannerheim Line in two sectors. But it was not possible to wedge into the second line of the Finnish defense on the move.

So it was in the center on the Vyborg direction. On the flanks, on the Kegsholm and Antreai directions, three Soviet divisions were completely destroyed, but not a single step could be advanced.

On February 11, Timoshenko threw a new mountain of cannon fodder at the weakening Finns, which began to bite into the second line of defense. Part of the troops, having passed through the fire of the Finnish batteries in forty-degree frost, on the ice of the bay, went to the rear of the third line of defense. Timoshenko was in a hurry. Stalin's order was to take Helsinki no later than mid-March.

On February 16, the German transport Altmark, which served as a supply ship for the Graf Spee, who died in the South Atlantic, tried to return to the Vaterland, breaking through the English blockade. Altmark had a whole department of the Abwehr with the latest radio equipment and a whole library of various secret documents, including cipher books, which the Germans traditionally treated with strangeness.

thoughtlessly.

The Altmark sailed through Norwegian territorial waters on a dark night without lights, where it was intercepted by two British destroyers.



The British raised the proud flag of their homeland on the Altmark and towed the transport to Plymouth along with the Abwehr secret library.

Soviet troops continued to bite into the reinforced concrete defenses of the Finns, suffering terrible losses. It was not possible to expand the breakthrough in the central direction.

On the coast of Lake Ladoga, Soviet troops, breaking through the first line of the Finnish defense, were surrounded and methodically destroyed. The units that came out through the ice of the bay, to the rear of the Finnish defense, got stuck in impenetrable snow and lost strength in battles for every meter of territory.

But the forces became more and more unequal. From all corners of the Soviet Union, trains were carrying to the front more and more thousands of tons of cannon fodder, which were immediately thrown into the meat grinder of battles. The Finns, realizing that their strength was running out, in desperation sought help from the world that sympathized with them so much. But there was no real help.

Back in early January, the Finns tried to start negotiations with the USSR on a possible conclusion of peace. With the blessing of the Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs Tanner, the famous Finnish writer Hella Vuolijoki went to Stockholm, where she held secret negotiations with "Madame" Kollontai for two months, but to no avail.

On the Karelian Isthmus, the meat grinder continues, on February 28, the Red Army breaks through the third lane of the Finnish defense in the central sector of the front, leaving advanced units to Vyborg.

On March 1, an attempt is made to take the city by storm on the move. The attempt ends with the encirclement and defeat of the 18th division of the Red Army. The troops stop and again wait for reinforcements. On March 6, Soviet troops again stormed and were again driven back with heavy losses. Timoshenko makes an attempt to surround Vyborg. Troops that have made their way through the ice of the bay are reaching the southern coast of Finland with the task of cutting the Vyborg-Helsinki railway. No one returned from this landing - everyone was destroyed by the Finns.

It was also not possible to bypass Vyborg on the right. Having blown up the locks of the Saimaa Canal, the Finns flooded the entire area around the city.

The denouement came soon.

On Stalin's desk lay a report from the Soviet ambassador in London, Ivan Maisky, who had been summoned to the Foreign Office the day before and handed a note stating that

"His Majesty's Government, closely watching the actions of the Soviet Union in Finland, expresses the hope that the USSR will have enough goodwill to resolve the protracted conflict at the negotiating table and stop the senseless bloodshed..."

The note ended with a very ornate phrase, the meaning of which, however, was quite clear:

"His Majesty's Government sincerely hopes that the Soviet Union will not allow the Soviet-Finnish conflict to escalate into a war of a much larger scale with the involvement of

third countries".

At the same time, a documentary film was planted on the Soviet side through intelligence, telling about the harsh everyday life of distant English garrisons scattered on countless bases of the vast empire.

It opened with the sounds of the march "Rule Britannia by the seas!" The superstructures and masts of English battleships floated across the screen, adorned with flags during some regular royal revue at Spithead.

But here the plot changes dramatically. Instead of the noble water surface of the Spithead raid, there are sand dunes. The device shows a close-up of the gate with the inscription: "Royal Air Force Base at Masoula, Iraq." Wellington heavy bombers are warming up their engines. The announcer suggests behind the scenes that each Wellington is capable of carrying three of these bombs over long distances, up to 3,000 miles. The animation shows the path of the bombers with a dotted line. Baku! That's the problem! Either you stop your troops in Finland, or we bomb Baku! You are left without oil and at war with us, the British.

The command of the North-Western Front is shocked: Stalin orders the troops to be stopped. Timoshenko believes that his mediocrity, his inability to take Vyborg is to blame for this! He humiliated the great leader, forcing him into peace negotiations with an insignificant enemy. What will happen to him now? Having completely lost his head, instead of ordering a ceasefire, he orders another assault on Vyborg ("I'll slap it with my own hand!").

On March 11, a Finnish delegation consisting of Deputy Foreign Minister Ruti, a member of the Finnish Diet Paasikivi and General Wilden arrives in Moscow, and the next day, March 12, a peace treaty is signed. On the Soviet side, it is signed by Molotov, Zhdanov and commander Vasilevsky.

According to the new treaty, the entire Karelian Isthmus, including Vyborg, departed to the USSR. The border was returned to the line determined by the Treaty of Nystadt in 1721 in the glorious times of Peter the Great. In addition, the USSR received a number of islands in the Gulf of Finland, the Finnish parts of the Rybachy and Sredny peninsulas, and the Petsamo region. But what about the "government" of Otto Kuusinen? No one ever mentioned him again, as if he never existed.

So the contract was signed. Starting at four o'clock in the morning, the Soviet radio, contrary to the usual night silence, hourly transmitted the text of the treaty. At the same time, Stalin demanded that Timoshenko and Meretskov take Vyborg at any cost. There was still time: according to the protocol attached to the treaty, hostilities were to be stopped on March 13 at 12.00.

At 6 o'clock in the morning, knowing about the signing of the peace, the Red Army went to storm the city, which, under Article II of the treaty, had already gone to the USSR. For six hours there was a bloody, fierce battle. This time the blow was delivered from the side of the old cemetery through the railway station. Despite the huge concentration of manpower and equipment, it was not possible to take Vyborg. Exactly at 12.00, as stipulated by the agreement, the parties ceased fire. The Finns began to retreat. So

Stalin "avenged" for the humiliation to which the British subjected him: in six hours of battle, another 862 Red Army soldiers were lost. Don't annoy the leader!

The Finns calculated their losses in the war, as expected, with an accuracy of one person.

They lost 23,542 people killed and missing, 43,501 people were wounded (of which 9,872 people remained disabled). The Soviet Union, of course, did not count its losses so scrupulously, operating in tens of thousands. Even closed sources give different figures: in one - 340 thousand people, in the other - 540 thousand people. The late General Novikov, a former employee of the personnel department of the NPO, explained to the author that the first figure is the number of deaths from wounds and frostbite, and the second is the total losses, taking into account those killed and missing. In addition to the known figures, we must also add another 843 Red Army servicemen who were shot by the verdict of the military tribunates "for negative" statements about this shameful war.

Stalin was not just annoyed, he was shocked. And the point was not that on the battlefields of the Finnish War, the Soviet Union vividly demonstrated the complete mediocrity of the military leadership, the complete helplessness of the army in solving elementary operational-tactical tasks. It was not even a matter of nightmarish shit and not that the USSR had lost all the remnants of its international prestige both as a fighter for peace and as a powerful military power, but that Stalin realized with horror that with such an army and navy to carry out an operation Thunderstorm is impossible. It is necessary to completely reform the armed forces.

He expels his favorite Voroshilov from the post of People's Commissar of Defense and appoints Timoshenko in his place, who worried about his fate in vain. On the contrary, Stalin liked the way Timoshenko tore the Mannerheim line, filling it with corpses. Decisive person. You can work with this! Instead of the expected execution, Timoshenko receives the title of Marshal and Hero of the Soviet Union.

## Chapter 4

Timoshenko learned about the new appointment at an urgent meeting of the Politburo, where Stalin himself summoned him, trembling with fear. Wrong selection of personnel and poor discipline - that, according to Stalin, was the reason for the failures in the war. Tymoshenko should urgently pay attention to these two issues. But, in the end, the leader is summarized, we achieved our goal, for we ensured the security of our northern borders and, first of all, Leningrad.

In any case, the "official" goal of this shameful war, which the USSR did not hesitate to impose on its tiny neighbor, was allegedly to ensure the strategic security of Leningrad and the entire North-West.

What has been achieved? Instead of a neutral, although not very friendly neighbor, an enemy who believed in his own strength appeared near the northern border, an enemy who was not defeated and passionately dreaming of revenge. The war with the USSR pushed Finland into the arms of Hitler. The previously democratic country has turned into a clear and well-established military mechanism. On the wave of militarism and patriotism that swept over Finland, not only the communists, but even those liberal politicians who, before the war, tried to prove the possibility of peaceful coexistence with the USSR, had to be silenced.

It is quite natural that in June 1941 Finland declared war on the USSR without hesitation. Defending the Karelian Isthmus, the 23rd Soviet Army was smashed to smithereens. The terrible blockade of Leningrad that followed was half provided by Finnish troops. Moreover, neither the United States, nor England, nor other allies of the USSR in the anti-Hitler coalition declared war on Finland, believing that a small country was fighting for a just cause. They, having put pressure on the USSR, saved the Finns from the inevitable occupation in 1944-45

years.

The inspiring results of the war were hidden not only from the public, but also from the army. Newspapers did not actually cover the course of hostilities, concentrating their attention on heroic episodes - true and fictional, associated with individual soldiers or pilots. At times, lists of the awardees were published, occupying the entire newspaper. This was followed by short reports about the "victory" on the Mannerheim Line, and then an unexpected message about the conclusion of peace. There was also an exchange of prisoners of war. 986 Finnish prisoners were transferred to their homeland through a checkpoint north of Vyborg. Soviet prisoners - emaciated, frostbitten disabled - were taken home on hospital trains, to which no one was allowed. Some of them were unloaded at the Finlyandsky railway station in Leningrad and late at night they marched to the Moscow railway station, from where freight trains sent them forever into the irrevocable labyrinths of the Gulag. Nobody returned home. During 1940 their families were also expelled from major cities.

How many were there? Soviet sources, as always striking in accuracy, speak of "more than 5 thousand." A. Solzhenitsyn claims that there were 25 thousand of them. All of them were loaded into trains, in which coils of barbed wire were carried on one of the platforms. Delivered to the regions of the Arctic, the former prisoners themselves fenced off their "zone", and then dug dugouts. Not almost no one survived.

However, this was not what worried Comrade Stalin. His vindictive heart burned with the insult inflicted by the British, and, stroking his mustache, the leader was preparing cruel revenge on the insidious Albion, naturally, by the hands of the romantic Hitler. March 30 Molotov, speaking at the Supreme Soviet, attacks the Anglo-French with much more ardor than before.

Understanding perfectly well that only the inevitable prospect of a war with England forced Stalin to make peace with Finland, Molotov, intoxicated by his own lies, enthusiastically tells the deputies what a blow it was for Chamberlain to conclude peace with Finland by the Soviet Union. Apparently, the British hoped that the Finns would occupy the USSR at least as far as the Urals.

Moscow has already received information about the upcoming landing of German troops in Norway. Realizing the risk associated with an amphibious landing in waters swarming with warships of the British fleet, the Germans asked Stalin to station part of the landing and support forces in Murmansk.

In order to somehow smooth out the miserable impression that the Stalinist army left during the winter war, a number of spectacular and noisy events were thought out. On April 4, in an atmosphere of patriotic hysteria, the deputies of the Supreme Soviet approved a new military budget.

57 billion rubles, of course, was a fake figure. Almost the entire state budget, directly or indirectly, was spent on military needs. A tank program, unprecedented in the world, was unfolding. The latest diesel tanks T-34 and KV had no analogue in any army in the world. The conveyor was carrying new models of bomber and fighter aircraft. The latest rocket launchers, chemical and bacteriological ammunition were tested at top secret test sites. The conveyor went from the factories of submarines. In Nikolaev, the giant hull of the newest battleship "Soviet Ukraine" was already rising under the upper deck.

By leaps and bounds a huge country went to war.

While Timoshenko was carrying out military reforms in the Soviet Union, feverish preparations were underway in Germany for a landing in Norway. The Soviet Union, knowing as an accomplice all the details of the upcoming operation, waited with bated breath. The British, apparently, knew everything better, because they read the German codes like pulp novels. knew

they were also talking about the German naval base in the Soviet North, but they were silent, not even informing the command of their own fleet, since they were playing their own game.

On April 7, the legendary Polish submarine Ozhel, which made a lot of noise in the Baltic in September 1939, when anti-submarine formations of the German and Soviet fleets were chasing it, "started" the Norwegian operation, sinking the German transport "Rio de Janeiro" full of paratroopers. The transport with the landing force was heading towards Narvik, about which the boat immediately reported to the commander of the metropolitan fleet, Admiral Forbes. On the same day, the British began to mine Norwegian waters.

Early on the morning of April 9, the inhabitants of Copenhagen unexpectedly found themselves among the columns of German soldiers marching towards the royal palace. At first, the Danes decided that filming was underway. A few minutes later, the palace guards opened fire on the arrogant participants in the "movie scene". The Germans responded. The shootout did not last long. The adjutant of the king appeared and ordered the guards to cease fire.

Denmark was occupied in one day. In itself, she was of no value, but her flank position in the North Sea made it necessary, according to German strategists, her occupation before the invasion of Norway.

On the same day, under the cover of a storm and snowstorms, the Germans landed sea and air assault forces in Norway. However, things did not immediately go as planned. The Germans, who threw almost all the available forces of their surface fleet into the Norwegian operation, suffered heavy losses. When crossing the Oslo Fjord, the heavy cruiser Blucher was sunk by Norwegian coastal batteries. In Oslo itself, the Germans were in for a big disappointment: an English sabotage group stole the country's gold reserves right from under the noses of the Germans. A column of trucks with gold raced along the mountain roads, pursued by motorcyclists of the German Mountain Jaeger Division. In one of the quiet bays, the gold was loaded onto the English cruiser Galatea and sent to Great Britain.

Meanwhile, the English fleet appeared on the scene. The cruiser Koenigsberg was hit by aircraft from the British aircraft carrier Furious, becoming the first ship of the Second World War to be sunk by air bombs. The "pocket battleship" "Lützow", with its stern torpedoed off by torpedoes, was hardly towed to the base. The cruiser "Karlsruhe", intercepted by an English submarine, capsized and sank with the entire crew. One by one, the transports sank under the blows of British aircraft and destroyers.

Two German battleships - "Scharnhorst" and "Gneisenau", sent to the sea to provide long-range cover for the landing, were intercepted by the English battlecruiser "Rinaun". Opponents were separated by ten miles of raging seas and a blinding snowstorm. Two volleys of the British disabled the artillery fire control system and the main battery turrets on the Gneisenau. Only an impenetrable snow charge allowed the Germans to break away from the enemy and return to base.

In Trondheim, the heavy German cruiser Admiral Hipper, a fellow of the sunken Blucher, damaged by a ram attack from the English destroyer Gloworm, along with the destroyers of her escort, stands without fuel and without hope of surviving. Two squadron tankers - "Kattegat" and "Skagerrak" - desperately trying to break through with fuel to help the "Hipper" and destroyers, go to the bottom under the fire of British ships.

The German garrisons, cut off by sea from Germany, fell into a desperate situation. The flotilla of German destroyers stuck in Narvik had already used up all their fuel. Having lost their last hope, the German sailors decided to flood their destroyers and, having formed a detachment of marines, go to the land front to help the surrounded mountain rangers.

At this stage of the operation, the English fleet suffered minimal losses, but for every destroyer lost, the British built ten during the war. The heavy and unjustified losses of the German fleet were irreplaceable.

"Congratulations on a brilliant landing," Molotov telegraphed flatteringly from Moscow to Ribbentrop. Berlin did not answer, because about the "brilliant landing" Hitler gave a tantrum to Raeder and Keitel. He doesn't want to listen to any excuses.

The silence of the generals is interrupted by Halder. Yes, the fleet suffered heavy losses, but this was to be expected, for Germany has always been strong not in the fleet, but in its ground forces. But the difficult situation in which the army found itself in Norway due to the weakness of the Kriegsmarine can be compensated for by simply shifting the center of gravity of the operation from northeast to west. If the Fuhrer gives the order to attack in the west, then the British will most likely transfer the main forces of their fleet closer to the canal, thereby easing pressure on Norway, which will make it possible to make another attempt to release the encircled units in Narvik and Trondheim. A successful offensive, unfortunately, has been postponed for several times, will solve the Norwegian question automatically.

Hitler is silent.

An unnaturally long silence crushes the ears...

Hitler takes another look at the map and schedules the offensive on the Western Front for May 9, 1940...

Soviet intelligence sent a message that on May 9 the Germans would launch an offensive on the Western Front. What to do? The day before, Stalin had held a meeting with those inside the Thunderstorm plan, whose number, unfortunately, was steadily growing, raising fears of a possible leak of information.

Of course, everything looks more than fine on the map. From the western ledge of the Bialystok balcony to Berlin is within easy reach. Auxiliary attacks on East Prussia and Denmark, capture of the coast, connection with the advancing Anglo-French somewhere beyond Berlin. The Lviv balcony looks even more tempting. With a short blow, Czechoslovakia is cut off from the Reich, a dash through Romania, the road to the Balkans is open, creating the possibility of a flank bypass of the French, the capture of northern Italy and the invasion of southern France. Landing in the Dardanelles.

To do this, you need to put the army in order. Stalin already has a signed decree on the introduction of personal military ranks into the Red Army on the table. Commanders, corps commanders and divisional commanders, fanned by the romance of the civil war, will disappear forever from the workers' and peasants' army, giving way to the solid, time-tested ranks of the old imperial Russia. Generals, admirals, colonels, captains of all ranks from May 7, 1940 will form the officer corps of the army and navy.

By decree of the same May 7, Shaposhnikov, Timoshenko and Kulik were promoted to marshals of the Soviet Union.

On the same day, the newly minted Marshal Timoshenko held a meeting on issues of military ideology, where reports were heard on the state of discipline and combat training in the Red Army.

It was no secret to any of those present that the entire army was experiencing unrestrained drunkenness, which caused 80% of all emergencies in aviation and the navy. Back in December 1939, People's Commissar Voroshilov issued a secret order "On the fight against drunkenness in the Red Army."

Along with drunkenness, an unprecedented theft of state property flourished.

While Tymoshenko, having developed frantic activity, created commissions to tighten the disciplinary charter, to strengthen unity of command, to strengthen combat training programs, to form new formations, to create new defense enterprises and new military educational institutions, Stalin, Shaposhnikov and Meretskov, with bated breath, waiting for developments in the West. Komkor Purkaev, now a lieutenant general, sent a confirmation message - the Germans would begin the offensive at dawn on May 10. This date coincided with all the data received by Soviet intelligence through other channels through Rome, The Hague, Brussels and, of course, Berlin.

On May 9, at 21.00, the Chief of Staff of the German Air Force, General Yoshonok, reported to the Fuhrer, who was in his personal train, that aviation was ready for the task, and weather forecasters would guarantee excellent flying weather in the coming days. After listening to the message, Hitler ordered the prearranged signal "Danzig" to be transmitted to all higher headquarters, which meant that the offensive was scheduled for the next morning.

On May 10, at 05.30, German aviation of two air fleets strikes at the Allied airfields. Five minutes later, ground troops cross the borders of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg.

The French command, in accordance with a plan worked out long before the war, moved 35 French and 10 British divisions into central Belgium towards General von Bock's army group "B", without realizing that they were exposing the rear of their strongest group under attack by the main forces of the Wehrmacht.

As in the Polish war, Guderian commanded a tank corps, which was part of General Kleist's tank group as part of Field Marshal Rundstedt's Army Group A.

Having crossed the Ardennes, Guderian's tanks in less than two and a half days, leaving behind 120 kilometers, reached the banks of the Meuse near Sedan. By the end of the next day, his tanks broke through the last defensive position of the enemy and opened their way to the west - to the coast of the Pas de Calais.

Cut by the tank wedges of Hoth and Guderian, the French army was falling apart before our eyes. The leadership of the troops was broken. The British expeditionary force began to roll back to the coast in the direction of Dunkirk. The success was so unexpected that the German command did not believe in it and was not ready for its implementation.

Guderian on the morning of May 20, having cut off the supply lines to the left wing of the allied forces in Belgium, went to the sea near Abbeville. Then he began to move further north, to the ports of Pas de Calais, behind the lines of the English army, which was still in Belgium, fighting the armies of von Bock. On May 22, Guderian's troops cut off the British retreat to Boulogne, and the next day to Calais. The British began to hastily withdraw their forces to Dunkirk, the last port left in their hands. Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg capitulated. The remnants of the French troops retreated south in a panic, opening the way for the Germans to Paris. Under the stress of impending military disaster, the Chamberlain government collapsed. Winston Churchill took the chair of the English prime minister, vowing to fight to the end.

Hitler, finally believing in unprecedented success, ordered Guderian to be presented for promotion as a colonel general.

Meanwhile, Guderian's tanks, continuing to move forward, by the end of May 23, were already only 10 kilometers from Dunkirk, the last stronghold of the Allies on the coast, where almost the entire British expeditionary force and several French

divisions. And then, at first glance, an absolutely incredible event happened. Guderian's tanks suddenly stopped.

For some reason, this stop is considered one of the mysteries of the Second World War.

In reality, everything was much simpler: the Germans entered the zone of action of the British naval artillery.

Therefore, right under the noses of the German tanks, the British carried out a major strategic operation to evacuate their troops to the metropolis.

In the period up to June 4, the British took 338,226 people by sea from Dunkirk.

Simultaneously with the evacuation of Dunkirk, the sharply changed situation on the continent forced the British to evacuate Norway as well, confirming Halder's prediction that the key to the Norwegian problem lay on the Western Front.

On July 10, Mussolini finally decided to support his Berlin idol by declaring war on England and France.

German troops continued their offensive on June 14, they entered Paris.

The French government asked Hitler for a truce. Churchill's call to retreat to North Africa and continue the war was viciously ignored. Not requests, but prayers were already flying to Berlin. The vengeful Hitler agreed to a truce on the condition that most of France remain occupied and the signing ceremony of the truce would take place in the Compiegne Forest, in the very headquarters of Marshal Foch, kept by the French as a national relic, where in 1918 the humiliated and confused Kaiser generals signed the surrender .

All these events were monitored from Moscow. Despite the fact that the Soviet government was fully aware of the upcoming events, their development caught Stalin and his entourage by surprise. In addition to the exhaustive and unquestionable intelligence information, on the eve of the German offensive in the West, Stalin received official German advance notice of it. On May 9, Count Schulenburg conveyed to Molotov an official message from his boss, Ribbentrop, stating that Germany was forced to take defensive measures in the face of the clear intention of the Anglo-French to invade the Ruhr area.

Soviet military intelligence correctly identified the opposing forces. The Germans concentrated 136 divisions, 2580 tanks, 3824 aircraft, 7378 guns on the Western Front. They were opposed by 147 Anglo-French divisions, 3,100 tanks, 3,800 combat aircraft and over 14,500 artillery pieces. These figures alone indicated that a long and bloody mutual meat grinder, similar to the one at Verdun, was inevitable.

The only concern was that the Germans, being clearly weaker, would not bleed to death in these battles, left, as in the last war, without supplies and ammunition.

In the early days of the German offensive, when the opposing armies engaged in vanguard battles in Holland and Belgium, everything seemed to go according to the scenario outlined in Moscow. Behind the reinforced concrete fortifications of the Maginot and Siegfried lines, one could fight indefinitely.

However, the further development of the event - the lightning defeat of the French army - an army that Stalin (and not only him) considered the strongest in Europe, giving it a leading role in the notorious crusade against the USSR - caused shock in Moscow. When was it announced



about the capture of Paris by the Germans, Stalin - for the first time in the presence of his accomplices - opened a safe, a mysterious safe built into the wall of his Kremlin office, where, to the greatest surprise of all those present, there was an open bottle of Kakhetinsky, two packs of English pipe tobacco and a vial of Bestuzhev drops. Having dripped Bestuzhev drops for himself, Stalin, without saying a word, left all those present and left the Kremlin for a nearby dacha, where the Kogan brothers, the leader's invariable life doctors, were urgently summoned.

"According to the information we have," the ageless Intelligence Service urgently reported from Moscow, "Stalin had a heart attack or a severe heart attack. Our source connects the illness of the Soviet leader with the defeat of the allied armies on the continent. Is this not evidence that Stalin, rooting for democracy with his soul, is playing a difficult game with Hitler, choosing only the right moment to destroy him as a rival to Stalin's hegemony in Europe and the world?"

After reading the message of his intelligence, Churchill sits down for his first message to Stalin. "The British government is convinced that Germany is fighting for hegemony in Europe... This is equally dangerous for both the USSR and England. Therefore, both countries must come to an agreement on the implementation of a common policy for self-defense against Germany and the restoration of the European balance of power ... "

This message, first of all, said that British intelligence had already sniffed out something about Operation Thunderstorm and, if necessary, of course, they would inform Hitler about this with great pleasure.

Stalin gave the following answer:

"Stalin does not see any danger of the hegemony of any one state in Europe, and least of all any danger that Europe may be absorbed by Germany. Stalin follows the policy of Germany and knows well many of the leading statesmen of this country. He did not notice any desire on their part to absorb European countries. Stalin does not consider that Germany's military successes threaten the Soviet Union and its friendly relations with Germany ... "

As gray shadows, German submarines are leaving for English communications from two bases on the territory of the USSR. The orchestra of the Leningrad Naval Base is solemnly thundering, welcoming the heavy cruiser Seidlitz, towed from Germany, sold in the USSR for 100 million marks. Together with the unfinished giant, a whole brigade of German naval specialists headed by Admiral Feige arrived. The drawings of the newest German battleship Bismarck, destroyers of the Narvik type, technological maps of gun mounts were handed over to the Soviet side. Soviet aircraft designers are studying with interest samples of the Me-109, Me-110, Yu-87 and Xe-111 aircraft received from Germany.

The new Soviet naval attaché in Berlin, Captain 1st Rank Vorontsov, and the German naval attaché in Moscow, von Baumbach, successfully negotiated the escort of German surface raiders along the Northern Sea Route to the Pacific Ocean - deep behind British lines, where their merchant ships are all still walking without any protection.

Recovering from the shock caused by the German victories, the developers of the Thunderstorm indicated to Stalin that the new situation had become even more favorable for the implementation of the plan. First of all, the French army ceased to exist. Almost the only army left in Europe is the German one. Now you can not be afraid

any conspiracy of the European powers against the USSR.

Now the main task is to incite Hitler to invade England.

But before embarking on the "Thunderstorm", it is necessary to carry out a number of intermediate measures, the essence of which was laid down in the German-Soviet agreements in August and September of last year. It is, explained the leader, about the termination of the incomprehensible state in the Baltic states and the return of the primordially Russian lands, torn away in 1918 by Romania. And therefore, as soon as the army and the NKVD cope with this intermediate task, he, Stalin, will judge how ready the army and the organs are to carry out the incomparably larger and more difficult task envisaged by Operation Thunderstorm.

On June 17, 1940, Molotov summoned Schulenburg to himself and informed the German ambassador that "the USSR intends to carry out the Anschluss of the Baltic States", to accomplish this task the USSR sent its emissaries to the Baltic republics: Zhdanov - to Estonia, Vyshinsky - to Latvia and Dekanozov - to Lithuania. If the first two are well known, then a few words should be said about Dekanozov, since he will be destined to play a fairly large, one might even say fatal role in Operation Thunderstorm.

An Armenian by origin, in his youth he joined an organization of Armenian militants, which had a rather vague political program, but was mainly engaged in outright robbery and robbery. Dekanozov's gang was constantly in need of weapons, and Lenin's emissaries offered to supply weapons for money. The robbers willingly paid, but in exchange, as a rule, they did not receive a shish. Litvinov, already known to us, got in touch with Dekanozov, the same one whom Stalin, before negotiations with Hitler, expelled from the post of People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. Litvinov himself in those distant times was associated with the "magnificent couple" Kamo-Koba, who did the same as the Armenian militants, but directly on behalf of the Bolshevik Party. It was then that young Stalin met the young Dekanozov and retained the best opinion of him.

Later, Stalin recommended Dekanos, as he affectionately called him, to his friend Beria, who attached the brave bandit to the NKVD to collect dirt on the people's commissars, their deputies and other high-ranking hierarchs of the party and government. So Dekanozov "grew" to the position of Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, remaining, of course, the head of one of the NKVD departments. Stalin personally, in the presence of Lavrenty Pavlovich, entrusted Dekanos with the general outline of the Thunderstorm plan and instructed the Anschluss of Lithuania to be carried out, emphasizing that Lithuania was the most important of all the Baltic republics, since it alone had a border with Germany.

While there were conversations and negotiations in Moscow, the Red Army had already poured into all the Baltic republics. The Soviet garrisons stationed in the Baltic States ensured in advance the capture of airfields, railway junctions, and vital facilities in cities. There was practically no resistance.

So when Dekanozov arrived in Lithuania, everything was already finished in general terms. President Smetona fled to Germany. The rest of the government, who did not have time to escape, resigned, and Dekanozov ordered their immediate arrest and deportation.

Dekanozov, who was responsible for Lithuania, was rapidly ahead of his highly experienced colleagues Zhdanov and Vyshinsky: with such events, Latvia and Estonia were two or three days late compared to Lithuania. But the presidents were captured there, and the Lithuanian one fled.

The ambassadors of the former Baltic republics appealed to Hitler for help. They addressed notes to the German Foreign Ministry, expressing indignation, asking for protection, pointing out the absolute illegality of Moscow's actions. However, in the secret protocol to

The 1939 treaty clearly stated:

"In the event of territorial and political transformations in the areas belonging to the Baltic states, the western border of Lithuania will be the line separating the spheres of influence of Germany and the USSR."

The technique of decapitation of the nation - the basis of socialism, worked out on its own people and tested in Poland, gave, as expected, excellent results, showing the whole world how the famous world proletarian revolution would be carried out. Already on July 21, the new Baltic "governments" appointed from Moscow declared their republics "Soviet and socialist" and turned to Moscow with a request to accept them into the USSR. The request was, of course, immediately granted.

The front pages of Soviet newspapers were filled with reports of "jubilant demonstrations of the people in Riga and Tallinn", of "a joyful meeting of Red Army units in Tallinn", of "people's celebrations on the occasion of joining the USSR in Kaunas". Meanwhile, along the roads of the Baltic states, raising clouds of dust that had not settled for weeks, Soviet troops marched westward in an endless stream, reaching the borders of East Prussia. Operation Thunderstorm began, although none of those taking part in the invasion knew this. The connection between Stalin's hasty actions and the catastrophe of the Allies on the Western Front was so obvious that already on June 23 the Soviet government found it necessary to publish a very extraordinary statement, which made it clear that the Soviet Union did not care at all about German successes in France: "In connection with the introduction of Soviet troops to the Baltic states," the statement said, "persistent rumors are circulating in the Western press about 100 or 150 Soviet divisions allegedly concentrated on the Soviet-German border. This, they say, comes from the concern of the Soviet Union with German military successes in the West, which gave rise to tension in the Soviet-German

relationships.

TASS is authorized to declare that all these rumors are a complete lie. Only 18-20 Soviet divisions were brought into the Baltic states, and they are not at all concentrated on the German border, but dispersed throughout the territory of the Baltic states. The USSR had no intention of exerting any "pressure" on Germany, and all military measures were taken for the sole purpose of ensuring mutual assistance between the Soviet Union and these countries ... Behind all these rumors one can clearly see an attempt to cast a shadow on the Soviet - German relations. These rumors are generated by the miserable conjectures of some British, American, Swedish and Japanese politicians ..".

The troops continued to roll across the Baltic towards the German border. The Germans received a note: until August 11, close their embassies in Kaunas, Riga and Tallinn, and by September 1, eliminate all consulates in the territory of the former Baltic republics.

Hitler felt humiliated, but could no longer do anything.

Not pleased and a friend - Mussolini. On June 10, he declared war on France and England, but a rare farce broke out on the Alpine front, occupied by Italian troops. For ten days after the declaration of war, the Italians were completely inactive, waiting for the Germans to approach the French army of the Alps from the rear.

The case nearly ended in disaster. Having defeated the Italians to smithereens, the French launched a counteroffensive and would certainly have occupied a good part of Northern Italy if they had not been forced to capitulate under the swift onslaught of German troops.

It was at this moment that the message came that Stalin had occupied the Baltic states, reaching the borders of East Prussia. This was followed by a sharp note demanding the closure of the German representations in the Baltics. An enraged Hitler immediately ordered the closing of the Soviet embassy in Paris and the dispatch of all Soviet diplomats to Vichy. Before Hitler had time to recover from Stalin's dashing actions in the Baltics, a new surprise awaited him. On June 23, 1940, von Schulenburg sent a telegram to Berlin from Moscow, in which notes of panic sounded:

"Urgent / Molotov made the following statement to me today. The settlement of the Bessarabian question cannot bear further delay. The Soviet government is still trying to resolve the issue peacefully, but it intends to use force if the Romanian government rejects the peace agreement. Soviet claims also extend to Bukovina, where the Ukrainian population lives ... "

Back in May, information began to come to Berlin about a dangerous concentration of Soviet troops on the Romanian border. German intelligence reported that in Kyiv, on the basis of the administration of the Kyiv Special Military District, a field administration of the Southern Front was secretly created. This front, in addition to the troops of the Kyiv district, included many parts of the Odessa military district. The command of this secret front was entrusted to the commander of the Kyiv district, General Zhukov.

Intelligence managed to get a copy of the secret order that came from Kyiv to the headquarters of the 49th Rifle Corps, concentrated in the Kamenetz-Podolsk region. The order clearly spoke of the upcoming "reunification" of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. While expressing the hope that things would work out peacefully, the command of the corps was nonetheless asked to prepare for combat operations. For this purpose, appropriate command and staff exercises were held.

All this, in principle, was not a surprise for the Germans, because the secret protocol to the treaty of August 23, 1939 clearly stated:

"Regarding South-Eastern Europe, the Soviet side indicated its interest in Bessarabia. The German side has clearly stated its complete political disinterest in these territories.

The question concerning Bessarabia is clear to the Germans. But what does Bukovina have to do with it, which never belonged to Russia. This is first. And in the mountains, the presence of Soviet troops on the territory of Bukovina created a direct threat to the rapid capture of oil wells in the Ploestinsky basin, all of which went to Germany, providing, together with supplies from the USSR, 87% of the needs of the German armed forces in fuel.

On June 25, Ribbentrop sends an urgent telegram to Schulenburg in Moscow:

"Please visit Molotov and tell him the following:

1. Germany remains true to the Moscow agreements. Therefore, she does not show interest in the Bessarabian issue.

2. The claims of the Soviet government regarding Bukovina are something new. Bukovina was the territory of the Austrian crown and densely populated by Germans. The fate of these ethnic Germans is also of great concern to Germany...

3. Fully sympathetic to the settlement of the Bessarabian issue, the imperial government at the same time hopes that, in accordance with the Moscow agreements, the Soviet Union, in cooperation with the Romanian government, will be able to resolve this issue by peaceful means.

On the same day, Schulenburg, after visiting Molotov, telegraphed to Berlin:

"Urgently!

I followed the instructions, met with Molotov today at 9 o'clock in the evening. Molotov expressed his gratitude for the understanding and readiness shown by the German government to support the demands of the Soviet Union. Molotov declared that the Soviet government also desired a peaceful resolution of the issue, but again emphasized the fact that the issue was extremely urgent and could not bear further delay. I pointed out to Molotov that the Soviets' renunciation of Bukovina, which had never even belonged to Tsarist Russia, would greatly contribute to a peaceful solution. Molotov objected, saying that Bukovina is the last missing part of a united Ukraine.."

The Germans naively thought they still had a few more days. They soon became convinced that the pace set by Stalin was far ahead of their strategic calculations. Having barely managed to send Schulenburg out, Molotov on the same day, June 26, summoned the Romanian envoy G. Davidescu to him and made the following statement to him:

"In 1918, Romania, taking advantage of the military weakness of Russia, forcibly seized from the Soviet Union (Russia) part of its territory - Bessarabia ...

The government of the USSR considers that the question of the return of Bessarabia is organically linked with the question of the transfer to the Soviet Union of that part of Bukovina, the vast majority of whose population is connected with Soviet Ukraine both by a common historical destiny, and a common language and national composition.

The Romanians were given 12 hours to think. On the morning of June 27, they were supposed to give an answer. A huge army was already roaring with tank engines at the eastern borders of Romania. The Romanian army was waiting for the order, although they assessed their chances quite soberly, knowing that the first air strike would not be on them, but on the oil fields of Ploiesti.

On the morning of June 27, Davidescu, the Romanian envoy in Moscow, announced his government's "readiness" to start negotiations with the USSR on the Bessarabian issue. No negotiations, Molotov snapped, demanding a "clear and precise answer" - yes or no. Davidescu tried to say something about Bukovina, but was forced to shut up when he was shown a document dated as early as November 1918, which stated that "the people's council of Bukovina, reflecting the will of the people, decided to join Soviet Ukraine." Sandwiched between Soviet ultimatums and German Soviets, the Romanian government, realizing all

the hopelessness of their position, ordered the army to withdraw in an organized manner to the new border, without offering resistance to the Red Army.

On June 28, Soviet tank and cavalry units poured across the Romanian border. The troops were on a forced march. Undercover intelligence reported with alarm that almost the entire population of Bessarabia and Bukovina had left their places and were fleeing to the West. This could not be allowed under any circumstances, for who needs land without slaves? In some areas, airborne assault forces were dropped to intercept refugees, setting up checkpoints on the roads. In the midst of all these events, when a frightened Hitler rushed around his office, looking with fear at a map that clearly showed how the Soviet Union, like a giant press, was slowly but surely pressed into Europe, clearly aiming at the Balkans, East Prussia and the very heart of the Reich, the news from Moscow continued to amaze with its formidable consistency.

On June 25, in the midst of the Romanian crisis, a message arrived about the unexpected establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia. The Soviet ambassador Plotnikov went to Belgrade. Familiar with the methods of work of the Soviet embassies, the Germans were alarmed. There were strong pro-Soviet currents in Yugoslavia, ready at any moment to open the country to Stalin's army. The General Staff was ordered to urgently develop a plan for the occupation of Yugoslavia, if necessary. But Stalin set a frantic pace, to which it was already very difficult to respond without pulling the army out of France.

On June 26, the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR is published in Moscow

"On the transition to an eight-hour working day, to a seven-day (without days off) working week and on the prohibition of unauthorized departure of workers and employees from enterprises and institutions."

The decree established criminal liability for absenteeism (being late for work more than 20 minutes was equated with absenteeism) and unauthorized leaving of work.

In secret party directives, issued a little later as a decision of the plenum of the Central Committee, it was explained that the directors of the enterprise should fully use the power granted to them and not be afraid to impose discipline through repression, not be liberal with truants, but mercilessly bring them to justice.

This decree, unprecedented in peacetime, spoke eloquently of the fact that Stalin openly transferred the entire industry of the country to a military footing, finally turning "the world's first country of socialism" into a huge concentration camp. Millions of undocumented collective farmers attached to state land became serfs as a result of general collectivization. The introduction of the passport system and registration attached all other residents of the country to the place of residence, and the last decree attached all workers and employees (the whole country) to the workplace!

On June 8, 1940, the newly minted Marshal Timoshenko addressed the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks with a note in which Comrade Stalin was mildly reproached that the punishments for military crimes provided for by the Criminal Code because of their incomprehensible liberalism "do not contribute to strengthening discipline in the Red Army ". For example, those who arbitrarily left the unit and were absent from it for more than six days are considered deserters. Marshal proposed to change this period

up to 6 hours.

June 11 Tymoshenko issues another historic order

"On the elimination of outrages and the establishment of a strict regime in guardhouses."

On June 12, his order appears on the introduction of disciplinary battalions in the Red Army, which almost coincides in time with the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council "On criminal liability for unauthorized absences and desertion", which provides for the direction of conscripts for unauthorized absences to disciplinary battalions for a period of 3 months up to 2 years.

In addition to the Gulag archipelago, disciplinary battalions began to flourish throughout the country.

The famous order of Tymoshenko N 120 of May 16 openly set the task of war:

"Teach the troops only what is needed in the war, and only as it is done in the war"

The army did not know peace day or night. The order required the use of at least 30% of "training time" at night. There were practically no days off, because they were all given to crosses, swims, races, etc.

Stacks lie on Stalin's desk top secret documents of particular importance that brook no delay.

"Strictly secret. Of particular importance. On the organization and strength of the Red Army.

"In total, 766,000 people will be attracted to the training camp this year, not counting the 234,000 people currently undergoing training camps."

Those who came to the training camp will no longer be released from the army until 1946. The first stage of the secret mobilization of reservists began. It is called collections for German intelligence.

following documents.

"Soviet secret. Of particular importance. On the production of T-34 tanks in 1940 ... "

"Soviet secret. Of particular importance. On the increase in the production of aircraft and aircraft engines ... "

"Top.secret.Of special importance. About the program of military shipbuilding ... "

"Soviet secret. On the organization of the structure of the Air Force of the Red Army ... "

## Chapter 5

In Berlin everyone looked to the East with greater anxiety. Informative reports about Stalin's military preparations were neatly placed on General Halder's desk and reported to the Fuhrer. Sometimes these reports were not entirely accurate in detail, but they conveyed the essence of the matter absolutely correctly: Stalin, apparently, had completely lost his prudence and

openly preparing the country for a big war. If the Stalinist horde surges into Europe, it will not be able to hold it back. The only thing that can be done is to deliver a preemptive blow to Stalin. But this is easier said than done.

After the capitulation of France, there was a general feeling in Germany that the war was ending. Hitler himself shared this mood, ordering the demobilization of 40 divisions out of 160 on June 15. Traveling around the memorable battlefields of the First World War, he noticed Max Ammann, who accompanied him, a former sergeant major in the same company where the Fuhrer served, now a major Nazi publisher, that the continuation of the war against England does not interest him at all, since, in his opinion, common sense will surely win out among the British and they will go to peace negotiations. Max Ammann respectfully inquired: did this not mean that the war was over? Hitler replied in the affirmative, noting that he was very pleased with such a quick end to the war compared to the previous one and with the minimal losses that Germany suffered, while achieving such brilliant successes.

Reflecting Hitler's thoughts, Jodl's second-in-command, Colonel Walter Warlimont, officially responded to the Naval Staff's request for a continuation of the war with England as follows: no preparatory work on this issue. A similar reply came from the General Staff of the Wehrmacht, which said: "The General Staff does not deal with the issue of landing in England, considering such an operation impossible." The Navy, which back in November 1939 was assigned to carry out the theoretical development of the problem of the "invasion" of England, also dealt with this problem without any enthusiasm, knowing better than other services how much the Germans were unable to carry out such a landing operation. Hitler knew this too, who, as you know, hated England in general, but was very respectful of the British fleet.

Wanting to end the war as soon as possible, on June 11, when the defeat of France was no longer in doubt, Hitler gave an interview to the German journalist Karl von Wignad to inform the world that his, Hitler's, intentions did not include hostile actions against the Western Hemisphere, that he did not want destruction of the British Empire, and insists only on the removal from the post of "warmonger Churchill".

On June 18, Ribbentrop, in a conversation with the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Ciano, as if confidentially informed him that England should only recognize as a fait accompli the establishment of German domination on the European continent, give up the colonies that belonged to Germany, captured by the British during the First World War and conclude a new agreement with Germany. trade agreement. Under these conditions, England will immediately receive peace. Otherwise, Ribbentrop bluffed, England would be destroyed. Expecting to make peace with England and induce France to future cooperation, Hitler and the French decided not to set too harsh conditions. As usual, only Alsace and Lorraine were taken from France. The colonies remained in French hands, the fleet was subject only to disarmament, the army to demobilization.

It was at this moment that Hitler learned about the events in the East, where the Stalinist offensive to the West began to develop rapidly. Intelligence reported with alarm about the increased activity of Soviet troops in the Transcaucasus, where the operators of the General Staff began to survey Turkish territory, about the activity of the Red Black Sea Fleet off the coast of Romania and Bulgaria, as well as near the Turkish straits. In the Baltic, after the capture of the Baltic, the activity of the Russian fleet also increased dramatically, growing at an incredible pace.

We must immediately transfer the army to the East. But England does not react in any way to peace proposals. Through the service of Walter Schellenberg, the Germans keep in touch with the Duke of Windsor, who lives in Lisbon, the former English King Edward VIII. Brother



King George IV does not hide his pro-German sympathies. He considers the war with Germany to be the national tragedy of England. If he had remained on the throne, this would never have happened. Using his vast connections in London, the duke is trying to induce his former subjects to prudence and recognition of the realities of the existing world.

England is silent, looking to the East. For three hundred years of its existence, British intelligence has entangled the whole world with its tentacles. The British understand better than others what is happening in Moscow. Having started the movement, Stalin will still be able to slow down for a while, but he will no longer be able to stop. This is evidenced by all his behavior and the country's militarization program, unprecedented in the history of mankind. But Stalin, having flared up, can easily reach the Atlantic. Which is better - Europe under Hitler or Europe under Stalin?

"The main thing is to destroy Hitler," Churchill said. "If Hitler threatened hell, I would immediately make an alliance with the devil!"

On June 30, General Jodl presents to the Führer a memorandum on the military capabilities of England at the present time, which directly states:

"The final victory of Germany over England is only a matter of time ... Large-scale offensive operations of the enemy are no longer possible."

On July 1, Hitler, speaking to the activists of the Labor Front, openly offers peace to England. He emphasizes that there is no reason to continue the war. Germany is ready to withdraw its troops from France, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark and Norway, giving these countries "complete freedom of national development." In the voice of the Führer, exculpatory notes that were not previously characteristic of him sound. What exactly does he require? Never mind. Old German colonies? Isn't that fair? Recognize Germany's right to Alsace, Lorraine, Western Poland, Bohemia and Austria? Are these not original German territories, torn away from Germany at various times by force of arms? So why should two great European nations kill each other?

The British response was completely unexpected for Hitler. On July 3, formations of the English Mediterranean Fleet under the command of Admiral Sommerville attacked the French naval bases in Oran and Dakar. England decided to insure herself against the unpleasant and dangerous prospect of the Germans seizing the French fleet or using it, with the approval of the defeatist government of Marshal Petain, for the war against England.

The action was carefully filmed by newsreel and slipped to Hitler ...

Hitler is furious and confused. He then runs around his office, then sits crouched at the table, clasp his head in his hands. The intelligence summary report for June is not uplifting. Some fundamentally new types of weapons are being tested at secret ranges in the USSR. Information is fragmentary. Experts tend to think that we are talking about some kind of thermite weapons. A large number of chemical weapons are being stockpiled. Somewhere beyond the Urals, experiments are being conducted with bacteriological weapons. Launched in a series of new tanks of monstrous power. A fundamentally new type of jet-powered fighter is being tested. The Kyiv Military District is preparing for major

maneuvers. Secret tests of a new type of parachute for the airborne troops. Stalin signed an order to bring the number of airborne troops to a million people in the near future ...

England quickly recovered from the Dunkirk shock. New ships are under construction, including several battleships, heavy cruisers and large aircraft carriers. The aircraft factories have increased the pace of work. The activity of British intelligence in the Balkans and the Middle East increased markedly. The danger of English provocations is obvious in order to lure Hitler into ill-conceived retaliatory actions. England has actually found itself a new ally - the United States, whose neutrality, apparently, is turning into a piece of paper. Raw materials and armaments flow from the USA to England, hidden under the flag of American neutrality. Any detention of their ships is inflated by the Americans to the level of an international scandal.

In the United States itself, there is a growing tendency to build up military power. It is planned to increase the production of aircraft up to 50,000 a year. Construction of new military bases is planned. Informed sources believe that Roosevelt will eventually pass a law on universal conscription in order to bring the US military to 4-6 million people.

Thus, all of the above suggests that the United States intends to oppose Germany as soon as they can deploy the necessary military forces for this. Tentatively, this could happen in mid-1942 or early 1943. Around the same time, the complete rearmament of the Red Army is expected and the British will bring their naval and military power to incomparable with the Germans.

states.

It can be said with certainty that these forces will not agree to any peace negotiations with Germany, no matter what conditions the German government sets, for their goal is dominion over the world ...

A war of annihilation is being imposed on the German Empire, and if time is lost, the prospect of this struggle seems very bleak, given the catastrophic inequality of forces in all areas, from human resources to the availability of strategic raw materials and industrial capabilities ...

Therefore, until the summer of 1942, i.e. before the expected date of final readiness for war of the United States, it is necessary to put an end to England and Russia, and then, speeding up the program of naval construction, together with Japan and Italy, attack the United States, thus crushing the last bastion of international Jewry in the world and giving the future of the German people is worthy ...

Obviously, the main enemy is Stalin. First of all, you need to deal with him. To do this, it is necessary to concentrate on the eastern borders a sufficient number of forces to defeat the Stalinist army in the course of a short, lightning-fast operation, say, this autumn ...

Unreal. During this time, the necessary forces cannot be concentrated and deployed. Okay, next spring then. And what if Stalin, seeing the concentration of such large forces on his borders, himself strikes a preemptive strike even before the Wehrmacht is fully prepared for the invasion?

It must be deceived by launching a global disinformation operation, hiding the direction of the main attack. Make sure that he is sure that we will strike at England, while in reality we will strike at Stalin.

Risky? Yes.

But if the Stalinist horde invades Europe, having already now an overwhelming superiority in people, tanks and aircraft, then it will not be stopped! It can only be defeated with a devastating surprise blow.

If, in the course of measures directed against England to disinform Stalin, it is possible to force England to capitulate or make peace, then so much the better.

But a blow to Russia must be struck in any case.

In the course of the operation, which will henceforth be codenamed "Harpoon", it is desirable to destroy the air force of England and at least somehow weaken its naval forces, while avoiding unnecessary losses. The illusion of a possible landing must be complete in order to keep England and the whole world, especially Stalin, in constant tension and expectation ..... Keitel, Jodl, Halder and Brauchitsch, who were present at the meeting, represented the army; Heydrich, Canaris and Schellenberg - intelligence services; Goering, Ribbentrop and Hess - the party. There was no one from the fleet! Everyone present was silent in concentration, considering the proposed plan, which in essence boiled down to the following: begin noisy preparations for the invasion of the British Isles, and under the guise of this preparation, concentrate troops on the Soviet border and crush Stalin. Apart from those present, not a single living soul should know about this operation...

What happened next was, as it were, a surprise that struck almost the entire command of the armed forces and especially the command of the fleet, which everything that follows will take at face value.

Three days later, i.e. On July 16, 1940, the generals and admirals, until recently so satisfied with the logical thinking of their Fuhrer, receive Directive No. 16 signed by Hitler with the following content:

Fuhrer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces

Fuhrer headquarters

July 16, 1940

7 copies

STRICTLY SECRET!

DIRECTIVE N16

ON THE PREPARATION OF A LANDING OPERATION AGAINST ENGLAND

Since England, in spite of her hopeless military situation, still shows no signs of being ready for a peace agreement, I have decided to prepare for a landing operation against England and carry it out if necessary. The whole of this operation is the destruction of the English metropolis as a base for the further conduct of the war against Germany, and, if necessary, its complete occupation ... "

The directive further stated that the implementation of the operation, which received the code name "Sea Lion", should be carried out by a sudden forcing

English Channel on a broad front from about Rameget to the area west of White Island. As prerequisites for landing on the territory of England, it was indicated: the defeat of the enemy air force, "so that they could not offer noticeable resistance to the German operation", the creation of mine-free routes, the preparation of minefields on the flanks of the landing routes, as well as the fortification of the English naval forces in North and Mediterranean seas.

The command of the ground forces was given the task of developing an operational plan for the transfer of first-echelon formations, distributing crossing facilities, and establishing, together with the headquarters of the Navy, areas for loading and unloading. The command of the naval forces was tasked with developing an operational plan, providing and bringing to the loading areas crossing facilities in an amount that meets the requirements of the ground forces, providing protection for the operation from the flanks, and preparing coastal artillery. The preparation of the operation was required to be completed by mid-August. July 17, i.e. less than a day after receiving the directive, the command of the ground forces issued a special directive for the invasion of Army Group "B" consisting of the 16th, 9th and 6th armies. In the famously drawn up operational plan, in every line of which there is a hope that it will not be implemented, everything was clear and simple.

In total, 90 thousand people land on the bridgeheads of the southern coast of England in the first wave, and on the third day of the operation their number should increase to 200 thousand. Six tank and three motorized divisions landed in the second wave, and on the fourth day of the operation 39 divisions were concentrated on the bridgeheads, not counting the two airborne divisions thrown ahead of the first wave with the task of disorganizing communications and control centers in the operational rear of the enemy.

Soviet intelligence turned out to be at its best, and Hitler's directive No. 16 fell on Stalin's desk, although the disinterested help of the Germans is clearly felt here.

Stalin calls the chief of intelligence, General Proskurov, and asks: does the Germans really have the possibility of carrying out an invasion of the British Isles? Such an invasion, Proskurov explains to the leader, depends on four main conditions:

1. Preliminary establishment of air supremacy by German aviation.
2. Ensuring dominance at sea, at least in the area of invasion and reliable fettering of the forces of the British fleet in the Atlantic and the North Sea.
3. Availability of sufficient tonnage of landing equipment.
4. The possibility of overcoming the coastal defenses and the resistance of the British troops in its depths.

Only by fulfilling all four conditions without exception, the Germans can hope for success. Without providing at least one of them, they will lose all chances.

According to our data, the British aviation industry produced 1,279 aircraft in May, 1,591 in June, and intends to produce about 1,700 this month. This is not counting the aircraft that are produced at American factories by order of the British.

At present, the Germans have concentrated no more than 600 Messerschmitt-109 fighters ready for combat and approximately 1,100 bombers of all types, including the two-seat Me-109 fighters used as bombers, at the airfields of Western Europe.

Thus, the British fighter aircraft - the main means of fighting for air supremacy - are several times superior in numbers to the German, while having

an additional advantage: the British would have to fight over their bases, while the Germans would have to do the same on the last grams of fuel.

As for the second condition - ensuring dominance at sea - here the position of Germany looks generally unpromising. At present, the German fleet has only four cruisers and a number of destroyers, torpedo boats and minelayers in readiness. The English fleet, according to our data, has 5 battleships, 2 aircraft carriers, 11 cruisers and more than 80 destroyers in the waters of the mother country alone. In addition, it is reliably known that the coastal waters of Britain are covered by a dense zone of mines and other barriers. These waters are guarded by more than 700 small ships, of which 200-300 are constantly at sea. Forty formations of the fleet continuously patrol the waters between the Humber and Portsmouth.

Next - vehicles for the implementation of such a large landing. The Germans don't have them. The necessary quantity can only be provided by extensive mobilization of tonnage from the German economy, in particular from the Rhine. Such a mobilization will deal a very heavy blow to the German economy, especially in the transport of coal and ore. In addition, even if Hitler goes to mobilize the tonnage, it will take at least three months to concentrate the required number of vehicles, i.e. sometime towards the end of October, when no landing is out of the question due to weather conditions in the English Channel at this time of year ...

Stalin interrupts the report of the intelligence chief with a sharp and impatient movement of his hand with a pipe clamped in it.

"Quite recently, Comrade Proskurov, you assured us with your figures and data that the German offensive in the West would lead to a protracted and bloody war. Now you are also assuring us, trying to assure us that a landing in England is impossible. Thus, you are misleading the Politburo of the Central Committee ... "

On the same day, General Proskurov was removed from his post, a week later he was arrested, and in October 1941, when it turned out that this time he was absolutely right, he was shot. General Golikov was appointed head of intelligence.

The sad fate of the unfortunate Proskurov clearly showed everyone what the leader wants to hear. The leader wants a German invasion of England. This determined the whole style of subsequent work. In the very first report, General Golikov, refuting all the conclusions of his unlucky predecessor, proved to the leader that an invasion of England was not only possible, but simply inevitable and could happen on any next day.

Golikov frankly misled the leader. He had no data on the inevitability of the landing. On the contrary, he had a report from the Soviet naval attaché in Berlin, Captain 1st Rank Vorontsov, that sources at the top of the German fleet considered the landing unfeasible. The same was reported by the military attaché General Purkaev, who noticed the transfer of troops instead of northern France to eastern Poland.

The stubborn Soviet military attaché had already enough bothered the Germans. It's time to send him to Moscow, or better still further away. But let Stalin do it. Having glued the last photograph of the amorous adventures of the dashing commander into the album, the Germans kindly send this album to Moscow, where Stalin, stroking his mustache, examines it with interest. Closing the album, Stalin comments on what he saw with the words: "Good, nothing to say!" and orders Golikov to call this "fellow" to Moscow.

Oddly enough, when he saw the album, Purkaev calmed down and even began to explain to Stalin what kind of information he received from the naked girls depicted in the photographs. Stalin benevolently smiles into his mustache: "Apparently, you sniffed out something very interesting,

since they sent this album here.

They hope that we will shoot you. But we, Comrade Purkaev, will not shoot you, but send you back to Berlin."

What does Purkaev think about the impending invasion of England? Is it possible? Of course, perhaps, the general replies confidently. It was about this that he "learned" from the patriotic girls instructed by the Gestapo, thanks to whom Purkaev appeared before the leader.

A dark night hung over the blank walls of the Kuntsevo dacha. It rains at times. Three rings of external protection vigilantly serve at the barriers on the roads, in secret pickets and ambushes along the entire path. On the alert and internal protection. On duty, security officers know much more than they are supposed to know. They know about the mine found on the podium of the Mausoleum on the eve of the May Day parade in 1938, they know about the mines that mysteriously appear on Stalin's route from the Kremlin to Kuntsevo. They also know about what no one is supposed to know at all: about a night battle just two kilometers from the dacha, which broke out on a blizzard night on February 3, 1939, when a group of unknown people in the amount of 12 people who had clearly undergone special training tried to break through to the dacha. 37 security officers remained lying in the forest - the bullets of unknown people were covered with a layer of cyanide and caused a quick death with any hit. No one was taken alive...

Stalin does not sleep. He sits in a deep chair, literally drowning in it. The light in the room is dimmed but not extinguished. The black eyes of the leader look into space with an unblinking gaze. The skin of the forehead has tightened, wrinkles have disappeared, the face looks surprisingly rejuvenated. Breathing is rare and very deep.

A terrible unknown energy pours into him. He himself does not know its nature, he is afraid of it, but without this energy he cannot exist for a long time. It started a long time ago, back in the Turukhansk mound, when the natives, who had lived for centuries in harmony with the harsh nature of the far north, taught him to connect to the great energy of Heaven in order to survive today and have the strength to follow the countless herds of their deer tomorrow. He also needs to survive today, and tomorrow to manage the myriad herd of his subjects, who are already almost two hundred million...

And throughout the Soviet Union, noisy "spontaneous" rallies of workers are sweeping, welcoming and approving the latest anti-worker decrees, turning them into powerless and faceless slaves. A huge country, squelching through mud and blood, over the bones of its own and other people's subjects, is almost openly entering the warpath.

Newspapers publish a message from the Wehrmacht High Command about German losses during the blitzkrieg in the West: 27,000 killed, 18 missing, 111,000 wounded. Captured - 1 million 900 thousand enemy soldiers and officers, including five army commanders. Losses, almost three times less than Soviet losses in the war with tiny Finland, unpleasantly cut the ears of Stalin and his inner circle. Even the population, fed on rumors of their own losses, could not but pay attention to this. The hidden hope that Germany would emerge from this war weakened and bled dry crumbled to dust. For the first time, millions of Russians heard surnames, at the mere sound of which hearts contracted in a terrible ominous omen: Guderian, Kleist, Goth, Manstein ...

But the Kremlin felt no omen. On the contrary, at the operational-tactical game held on July 25 in the presence of Stalin, the actions of the German tank groups were recognized as "adventurous". Intelligence did a great job, delivering several cubic meters of operational-tactical weapons for analysts.

orders for various tank groups of the Wehrmacht. A total adventure! Please make sure that Marshal Shaposhnikov reports in his usual old-mode manner. The tanks are ahead of the infantry by almost a week's march. They rush forward without secured rear and flanks. In contrast to the First World War, in combat formations, artillery saturation is exceptionally weak. From the air, the group is supported, by our standards, by an incomplete aviation brigade.

The Germans take on a fright! A well-disciplined, non-panic army can easily cope with such completely ill-conceived tactics, cutting off the tanks from the infantry, and the infantry hurrying behind the tanks from the rear. This is the first. And secondly, the German defense was not thought out at all. Guderian drives one cavalry division from flank to flank, which copes with its task in the momentum of a swift offensive. But if the grouping itself is hit, and its means of control and communications are disabled, then it will not be difficult to defeat it.

As our calculations show, they will lose a third on crossing by sea and when unloading at the bridgehead, and another third - when breaking through the British defenses. And that's when we start to act. It is important not to miss the moment, and therefore constantly keep the army ready. In addition, calculations carried out by the General Staff show that in order to carry out an operation of such a large scale as Thunderstorm, it is necessary to increase the tank fleet by 40%, the aircraft fleet by 50%, and the strength of the army by a third.

From a self-confident, cunning politician, Stalin gradually begins to turn into a military leader. Just five years later, having become, like Suvorov, the Generalissimo of the Russian army, he would say in a friendly manner to Field Marshal Montgomery: "To hell with politicians. After all, we are military!" But it will be in five years - as long as the geological epoch. In the meantime, he is studying the regulations of the Red Army, frightened by the terms and formulations. He never served a day in the army, and the civil war only taught him to be afraid of the military and not to trust them.

Unlike Stalin, Hitler had every reason to consider himself an experienced military man - after all, he spent the entire First World War in the trenches and was wounded, poisoned with gases, and had military awards. No matter what evil tongues say about these awards, they were not given in vain in the Kaiser's army.

Once again, Hitler thinks out his plan. Of course, he understands that a landing in England, in the current state of the German fleet, is madness. But many people were so carried away by this idea that the reality faded again, covered by the mirage of a swift throw across the English Channel. It's great! The main thing here is to do everything subtly, because it is already clear that Stalin is just waiting for us to start landing in England in order to attack us. But no matter how subtly you act, it will not be possible to deploy approximately 200 divisions on the Russian borders without being noticed.

July 31 Hitler convenes the leadership of the armed forces at his villa in Obersalzberg. Grand Admiral Raeder says bluntly that he considers it impossible, given the current balance of naval forces, to transport so many troops across the strait. Yes, there is a plan to disperse the forces of the English fleet in order to divert them from the mother country.

Great hopes were pinned on the Italian fleet, but so far it shows no desire to move to active operations. In addition, before the commissioning of the battleships Bismarck and Tirpitz, the operation to divert the English fleet from the waters of the mother country could not be reliably carried out. And both ships, although work on them goes around the clock, cannot be put into operation before the spring of 1941.

Further, the British aviation is very active, it is unlikely that the Luftwaffe has gained air supremacy. Throughout July, German aircraft bombed British ships in the strait and southern ports.

Great Britain. Goering promised to destroy enemy fighter aircraft during July, drawing them into battles over the English Channel. According to unverified reports, the Luftwaffe sank only four British destroyers and 18 coasters, while losing 296 aircraft destroyed and 136 damaged. The British also announced that they had lost 148 fighters. But in any case, the commander-in-chief of the Kriegsmarine continues, even if all the above conditions did not exist, the fleet is not able to complete preparations before September 15th.

We are talking only about the concentration of landing craft, and then on the condition that there are no unforeseen circumstances due to enemy actions or because of the weather. (The weather is the best friend of the admirals of the whole world, behind which they reliably hide from what they do not want to do.)

The admiral then touches on his main differences with the army. The Army wants to land on a broad front from the Straits of Dover to Limey Bay, but the Navy is unable to provide the necessary tonnage for a landing on such a broad front, not to mention the expected reaction of the fleet and enemy aircraft. The admiral insists that the landing front be shortened, extending from the Strait of Dover only to Eastbourne.

"All things considered," the admiral concludes, "I believe that the best time for the operation may be May 1941."

But the British army, which is currently in very bad shape, will get 8-10 months of respite, which will give it the opportunity to form another 30-35 divisions and concentrate them in the places of the proposed landing of our troops.

The operation to "disperse" the British fleet has already begun and will continue. Auxiliary raiders went into the ocean, after the repair is completed, warships will also go there. The Russians kindly offered to escort our raiders to the Pacific Ocean using their Northern Sea Route. Promises to sharply increase the activity of the Italian fleet. He has problems with fuel and repairs, but they will all be resolved in the near future. A plan for a distraction strike in Africa has been developed. But we will achieve a decisive result by the capture of the British metropolis. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare for the landing by September 15th. The final decision - whether to carry out the operation on September 15 or postpone it to May 1941 - will be made after the Luftwaffe has carried out a decisive offensive against England, which will begin in the very near future.

"FUHRER HEADQUARTERS

August 1, 1940

TOP SECRET

Directive No. 17 on the conduct of air and sea war against England

In order to create the conditions necessary for the final crushing of England, I intend to continue the air and sea war against the British mother country more intensively than before.

Based on this, I order:

1. German air force to suppress the British air force with all means at their disposal and as quickly as possible.
2. The Luftwaffe is the vanguard of Operation Sea Lion...



6. An intense air war is to be started on August 6 or immediately after that date...

Adolf Hitler".

The directive signed by Keitel read:

"TOP SECRET OPERATION SEA LION"

The Commander-in-Chief of the Naval Forces reported on July 31 that the necessary preparations for the Sea Lion could not be completed before September 15. Based on this, the Fuhrer ordered:

The Army and Air Force must continue to prepare for Operation Sea Lion and complete it by September 15th.

Despite warnings from the Navy that they can only guarantee landing cover on a narrow stretch of coast (to Eastbourne), preparations must be made for the invasion on a broad front, as originally planned ... "

While the High Command of the Wehrmacht launched an unprecedented campaign to mislead Stalin, on August 1 Stalin himself sat in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, listening to another boring speech by Molotov, who instructed the deputies in understanding aspects of the country's foreign policy. In his boring, methodical voice, the head of the government broadcast:

"Germany has achieved great success in the war against the Western Allies. However, she did not solve the fundamental problem - how to end the war on the terms she desired. On July 19, the Reich Chancellor proposed to Britain that peace negotiations be started, but the British government rejected his proposal, considering it as a demand for surrender.

It seems that a new phase of the war is beginning - a struggle between Germany and Italy on the one hand and Great Britain, supported by the United States, on the other.

Molotov, in principle, does not hide his joy at the fact that England does not stop fighting, and his reference to the United States makes the deputies understand that Germany does not have much chance of winning this war and that this fact does not upset the Soviet government in the least. But all this is presented cautiously, in Newspeak, which is not so easily unambiguously deciphered.

Describing the current Soviet-German relations, Molotov does not say anything new, but repeats word for word the well-known TASS statement of June 23:

"Recently there have been many speculations in the British and pro-British press about the possibility of worsening relations between the Soviet Union and Germany. Attempts were made to frighten us with the growing power of Germany. But our relationship is not based on

temporary opportunistic considerations, but on the fundamental state interests of our two countries.

Molotov also touches on relations with England. Here you have to be very careful. Firstly, not to frighten off the Germans, but also not to anger the British very much, who, in the event of the beginning of the Thunderstorm, at least temporarily, will turn into allies. Molotov, however, emphasizes that "after all the hostile acts that England has committed against us, one can hardly expect any favorable development of Anglo-Soviet relations."

The Anglo-Soviet trade agreement was renewed, the British even agreed to transfer part of the gold reserves of the former Baltic republics to the USSR. They are clearly waiting for some kind of drastic change in the course of the foreign policy of the USSR. Has the ubiquitous intelligence service sniffed out about the impending "Thunderstorm"? The British will do everything possible to spoil Soviet-German relations, set Hitler against the USSR, so that he, refusing to invade England, rushes to Russia. Then what Stalin had envisioned would happen: a long, bloody and exhausting war that would so weaken and bleed both countries that it would enable England, after sitting out on her islands, to dictate the terms of the future peace and maintain a dominant position in Europe.

Molotov ends his speech according to the standard pattern with which all great and small leaders of the Soviet Union were required to end any speeches, urging the Soviet people to be in constant mobilization readiness.

On August 3 (again surprisingly quickly) Hitler's directive No. 17, already in Russian translation, fell on Stalin's desk. Many other data coming from various sources confirmed the intention of the Germans to launch an offensive against England, and only a short message intercepted from the British station in Brussels spoke of the transfer of German troops to the territory of the General Government and the Protectorate, where the total number of combined arms and tank divisions was already raised to 36.

Thinking over the situation, Stalin came to the conclusion that it would be nice to shift the center of gravity of the Thunderstorm from the northern and central directions to the south, i.e. deliver the main blow to the Balkans.

He informed Shaposhnikov, Timoshenko and Meretskov about this, which puzzled them greatly. As you know, the old plan of Shaposhnikov, which was available in one copy, provided for the implementation of Operation Thunderstorm to concentrate approximately 180 divisions and 172 air regiments on the western border. These forces were supposed to strike the main blow in the Warsaw area with access to the Vistula in its lower reaches, while crushing the enemy troops in East Prussia with the northern flank. At the same time, the left wing of the front, inflicting an auxiliary blow on Lvangorod, crushes the enemy's Lublin grouping and enters the Vistula in its middle reaches. Further, capturing Denmark on the right flank, all fronts cross the Oder on the move, developing an offensive against Berlin. At this stage, diplomacy ensures the consolidation of allied relations with England, at least until the Red Army enters the English Channel.

The plan was carefully drawn up with a detailed description of the direction of strikes, areas of concentration, the number of troops, their tasks, as well as the tasks of the fleet, aviation, engineering troops and even captured teams and special teams of the NKVD, special teams for combing territories, for the rapid "movement" of hostile elements among the local population in the eastern regions of the USSR and others, already perfectly worked out in Poland, the Baltic states and Bessarabia. For the sake of this plan, the Bialystok and Lvov balconies were drawn.

After the surrender of France, it became clear that the plan was outdated, since, for all its

merits provided for the conduct of hostilities only against Germany. Now, when a defenseless and torn Europe lay before the USSR, Stalin decided on a plan change.

The main task after the German invasion of England will be the capture of the Balkans, i.e. occupation of Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, the northern regions of Greece and the Turkish straits. At the same time, on a broad front, the Red Army enters the southern borders of Germany and invades this country both from the south - through the territory of Austria and Czechoslovakia, and from the east, according to the original plan, using "balconies" for swiftness.

What will Germany's initial reaction be to our invasion of the Balkans? There may be several options here. Since the main forces of the German armed forces, including the overwhelming majority of aviation and navy, will be engaged in battles on the territory of England, and there is reason to believe that these battles will be very cruel and bloody, Hitler is unlikely to dare to react quickly and sharply in the Balkans themselves, which it is necessary to pass quickly and efficiently, without giving anyone time to come to their senses, sweeping away any resistance. The prerequisites for this have been created: the Red Army has an advantage over all potential opponents in the Balkans by about 10-15 to 1. In addition, we expect that as the Red Army advances in many countries, in particular, in Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Greece will undergo social revolutions, and the peoples of these countries will themselves ask for our help against Hitler.

Thus, directly in the Balkans, Hitler will not be able to oppose anything real to us, and we will see if we should contact him. According to the situation. But! The leader raised his finger: Hitler can react, and I think that he will do so - on our western borders, if we ourselves do not go on the offensive from the "balconies" before that, as Boris Mikhailovich and Comrade Meretskov suggest. Then we go over to the offensive according to the old plan. But the main thing now is the Southwestern Front and the Kiev Special Military District. In order to help Comrade Zhukov, it is necessary to send representatives of the People's Commissariat of Defense there and bring the district to a state of the highest combat readiness by September-October.

The Germans have already begun a large-scale operation to "pulverize" the British fleet. General Golikov read out a report: one by one, German auxiliary cruisers, disguised as merchant ships, slipped into the ocean communications, raising the flags of neutral countries. On March 11, raider No. 16 Atlantis entered the ocean and, according to our information, is successfully operating; Raider No. 36 Orion followed on 7 April. Then they still had orders to pull as many forces of the English fleet as possible away from Norway. In May and June, the second line of auxiliary cruisers broke into the ocean. These raiders have already sunk at least 300 thousand tons of the English merchant fleet, which forces the British to keep large cruising formations away from the mother country.

It should be noted that auxiliary cruisers in the fight against English trade turned out to be much more effective than large warships, whose exit to the sea is difficult to hide, which are more easily detected, and, taking into account the general balance of forces at sea, are easily neutralized. Thus, the battlecruiser Gneisenau, operating in the Iceland area, was torpedoed by a British submarine on June 26 and out of action for a long time. In this regard, Golikov reminds Stalin that the German auxiliary raider No. 45 "Komet" has been anchored off Kolguev Island for about a month and is waiting to be led by the Northern Sea Route to the Pacific Ocean - to the deep rear of the English maritime trade, where he will do business. like a fox in a chicken coop.

The leader thinks. Let's wait a bit to see how things go. Northern problems sit in his liver. Despite all the measures of secrecy, British intelligence got wind of the "Basis Nord". English ships are increasingly appearing in the Barents Sea. English

the press is making noise day after day that the USSR is not a neutral country, but "actually at war", and they threaten to take action.

These steps are understandable. Baku, Grozny and Guryev are our precious and, alas, so far the only sources of oil...

Left alone, Stalin thoughtfully approaches the bookcase. With an automatic movement, he takes out the 42nd volume of Lenin's works, opens it on a bookmark and rereads his favorite lines once again:

"...Until we have conquered the whole world...use all possible contradictions and opposites between the imperialists...If we are forced to tolerate such scoundrels as the capitalist thieves, each of whom sharpens a knife against us, it is our direct duty to move these knives to each other. against a friend..."

He, Stalin, fulfilled the prophecy of a genius. Knives are moved against each other. Germany and England will soon destroy each other. Now we are helping Germany, but soon we will become allies of England, having replaced German troops on the coast of the English Channel, and then with all the might of our army and navy we will fall upon the last stronghold of world imperialism - Great Britain ...

On August 5, the chief of staff of the 18th Army, General Marx, following the oral order of the Fuhrer, presented the first version of the Operational Project "Ost" - a war plan against the USSR. General Marx based his plan on the experience of the war with Poland. Based on the experience of this war and an assessment of the terrain and the outline of the road network in the Soviet Union, he proposed the creation of two strike groups aimed at Moscow and Kiev. By this, Marx reflected the opinion of the General Staff, which believed that Moscow - the center of the Soviet Union - played a much greater role than the capitals of other countries. The General Staff had no doubt that Stalin would deploy the main forces of the Red Army in the direction of Moscow. Formulating the idea of his plan, Marx pointed out that the goal of the upcoming war was the need to "smash the Russian armed forces and make Russia unable to act as an enemy of Germany in the near future.

To ensure the protection of the Reich from Soviet air strikes, Russia must be occupied up to the line: the lower Don-Middle Volga-Northern Dvina.

Halder approved Marx's plan. The General Staff officers knew that in the OKW, under the leadership of Jodl, they were developing their own plan, known as the Lossberg Study. Unlike Marx's plan, "Etude" provided for the creation of three shock groups and close cooperation with the Finns during the attack on Leningrad, the capture of which was given special importance.

Military professionals were waiting for Hitler's decision.

And Hitler was looking forward to the start of the air attack on England, falling under the spell of the irresponsible assurances of his friend Goering.

Within the vast plan to mislead Stalin, there were goals of their own: England, unable to withstand the blows of the Luftwaffe, would ask for peace and get it, but on much worse terms than he offers today. Information coming from the southern regions of England inspires optimism. Panic. There is practically no army. The roads to the north are clogged with refugees. The royal family and government are ready to flee to Canada. All sources of information seem to invite the Germans to immediately invade. But there is an English fleet in the strait, and so far it has not been possible to remove it from there by the manpower of the German fleet. And the Italians?

When, on the day Italy declared war, the Mediterranean squadron of the British entered

Adriatic, the Italians were quieter than mice sitting in their bases, afraid to stick their nose out. In July, the Duce himself managed to push the Italian ships into the sea several times with formidable orders, but at the first sight of the British, they turned back.

The Duce personally assured Hitler that his fleet would sweep the British out of the Mediterranean. Beautiful battleships "Roma", "Litorio", "Vittorio Veneto", "Giulio Cesare", "Cavour" - what against them are the English Mediterranean ships - the old women of the times of Jutland? But the formidable reputation of the "ruler of the seas", whose fleet has had no rivals for more than a hundred years, presses, presses.

The Duce got into the war in full confidence that everything would be over by September, and he would have every right to be present at peace negotiations, participating in the post-war division of Europe and the world. The Duce does not yet know that the Fuhrer needs all the plans to "crush" England, mainly so that Moscow believes in the authenticity of the plans for Operation Sea Lion.

And one more problem worries Hitler. Intelligence reports with alarm about the concentration of Soviet troops on the borders of Romania and Bulgaria, about the activity of Soviet diplomats in Sofia and Budapest, about the actions of the Soviet intelligence network in Belgrade and Athens, about the frequent appearances of Soviet warships near the Bosphorus. This is literally information of the last days. Stalin unexpectedly shifted the center of gravity of his armed forces to the south, and it is quite obvious what he is going to do.

The Soviet press is full of reports about the "heinous provocations of the Romanian military" on the Soviet border. The same thing happened before the invasion of Poland, Finland and even the Baltic states. Stalin is preparing to at least grab another piece of Romania. This time with the Ploiesti Oil Basin, the only source of crude oil that Germany can count on, apart from, of course, huge supplies from the USSR. But Stalin can stop these deliveries at any moment. If Romanian oil is seized by Stalin, the entire German war machine is in danger of becoming a pile of dead iron.

This issue requires an immediate solution - in no case should Stalin be given the opportunity to make the first move, and since he moved south, it is necessary to expand the front of the future strike against him, i.e. deploy troops in Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria. Maybe even in Turkey.

German intelligence in England recently obtained interesting information from a source close to the Soviet ambassador, Ivan Maisky. The essence of this information is as follows:

"Stalin will not begin active operations until the landing of the Wehrmacht in England."

In other words, he is waiting for our invasion of England to stab us in the back. If this is not another "disinformation" of the British, who are thus trying to disrupt our plans to invade their island, then we can feel more confident. Only constantly let Stalin know that our plans for the invasion of England are final and that nothing in the world can stop us. Even the English fleet...

In the Kiev Special Military District of General of the Army Zhukov, summer maneuvers are underway, as close as possible to a combat situation. Bombers and fighters are concentrated at border airfields. One district of Zhukov has more of them than all three German air fleets allocated by Goering for an air offensive against England. Artillery roars day and night at the ranges advanced to the border, practicing all types of combat shooting. Tanks are gathering dust along the roads of the acquired Bessarabia and Bukovina. They are rapidly moving towards a new frontier, and no one knows if they will stop or not. The newly arrived rifle divisions are retrained in a feverish rush

mountain shooting. There are many mountains ahead - from the Carpathians to the Alps. The formidable silhouette of the battleship Paris Commune, surrounded by bristling cruisers and destroyers, looms near Romanian territorial waters. The highways from Constanta to the north are filled with refugees.

Stalin, waiting for the landing of German troops in England, shifted the center of gravity of the Thunderstorm to the south, guided by several considerations at once.

Firstly, the strike through Romania and Bulgaria made it possible not to immediately enter into direct confrontation with the German troops, while at the same time carrying out their deep coverage, which made the German counterattack in the regions of Lvov and Bialystok unpromising.

Secondly, the capture of the Ploiesti oil put the Germans in such a difficult position that even theoretically it was not seen how Hitler could get out of this situation, having his best troops stuck in bloody battles on the bridgeheads of southern England. Even if he had found such a way, the offensive of the Soviet troops in huge pincers through central Poland from the east and through Austria from the south - provided that the blockade of Germany by the British fleet continued - would somehow lead to the collapse of the Reich.

Thirdly, if we take into account the inevitability of proletarian revolutions in many, even if not in all, countries, then this would lead to a long-term and lasting hegemony of the USSR and communist ideology in Europe, and given the subsequent rapid collapse of the British Empire, in everything the world.

Stalin carefully weighed his every step, planned and calculated - right up to the third sign. Something for him was roughly calculated by Lenin, who, in fairness, I must say, was much more adventurous than his all-calculating student. Especially in terms of proletarian revolutions.

Hitler at first clearly underestimated his Moscow accomplice in robbery. He recklessly recognized southeastern Europe as the sphere of interests of the USSR, forgetting in a fever about the precious Romanian oil and not seeing what Stalin clearly saw. And Stalin saw a great opportunity for the partition of Romania, which, in terms of beauty of execution, should have surpassed the recent partition of Poland,

The fact is that Romania, so to speak, had the misfortune to be among the victorious countries of the First World War and, as such, acquired the vast lands of its neighbors who lost this ill-fated war.

Hungary, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, paid for the sins of the collapsed aged monarchy by giving Transylvania to the victorious Rumshes.

Bulgaria, which, having spoiled all the ideas of pan-Slavism, fought against Russia on the side of Germany, gave Romania its province of Dobruja.

The incredible ease with which Stalin took away Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina from the Romanians, using only threats and ultimatums, tempted all the other neighbors of Romania, who made such territorial claims to Bucharest that if they were fulfilled, only a memory would remain of Romania, as of what something Urartu.

The enormous work carried out in Greece and Yugoslavia was somewhat hampered by the intrigues of British intelligence, whose agents the Balkans were packed with.

But Hungary has long-standing territorial claims to Yugoslavia, and the Bulgarians have to the Greeks, who occupied Bulgarian Thrace.

So, the skillful intrigues of Soviet intelligence, as purposeful as in the troubled years of the Balkan wars, when Russia, inciting Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece against Turkey, eventually achieved that Greece, in alliance with Serbia, defeated Bulgaria, again prepared the Balkans for the situation when all the countries of the region were ready to cling to each other, preparing the environment for proletarian revolutions and the liberation campaigns of the Red Army.

Hitler's biggest flaw was his completely uncontrollable ability to wishful thinking. Despite all the lessons of the past and present, he continued to believe that his faithful ally Mussolini could fulfill the tasks that Hitler, in his romantic naivete, entrusted to him. Among these tasks, in addition to neutralizing the British fleet in the Mediterranean and seizing the Suez Canal, was the task of monitoring the situation in the Balkans.

As early as December 1939, the Fascist Grand Council of Italy declared: "Everything that pertains to the Danube basin in the Balkans is of direct interest to Italy."

Mussolini's son-in-law, Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano, publicly promised military assistance to Romania, pompously calling it "a guardrail against the Soviet Union." However, as usual, Italy was unable to do anything. The road to the Balkans was blocked by Greece and Yugoslavia, which, without any enthusiasm, watched the fluffy Duce.

Hitler again had to do everything himself. To begin with, he managed to seat the Romanians at the negotiating table with the Hungarians and Bulgarians, although it was obvious that these negotiations would lead to nothing. But it was necessary to buy time, at least a couple of weeks, to bring the troops closer, and this was not so easy in the web of false transports and activities carried out as part of the upcoming show - the "offensive on England" - played out for Stalin ...

On August 12, Goering gave the order to launch Operation Eagle. Twelve British radar stations were subjected to a preliminary strike that day. The presence of British radar came as a complete surprise to the Germans. Hitler, although he quoted Nietzsche at every opportunity, at heart was some strange cross between a Hegelian and a Marxist, sincerely considering everything related to electronics and nuclear physics to be "Jewish things." Poorly understanding the importance of radars in the air defense system, the Germans nevertheless decided to bomb them. They bombed somehow lazily: they destroyed one station, damaged five, and decided that it was enough to waste ammunition on all sorts of trifles.

On August 13 and 14, more than 1,500 Luftwaffe aircraft attacked British fighter bases. Although the German victory reports gleefully announced that five enemy airfields were completely destroyed, in reality the damage done was negligible. The British lost 13 aircraft, the damage to Germany was more significant - 47 aircraft.

Moscow was enthusiastic about the beginning of the offensive against England. Since Stalin was brought a report based on German data, which spoke of the destruction of 134 British aircraft and admitted the loss of 34 of his own, it was clear that if things went on like this, British aviation would be crushed and destroyed, as Goering had promised, within two coming weeks.

A coded message flew to the Kiev and Odessa districts with an order to complete preparations "for major troop movements" no later than 15 September. There was little time left, and problems piled up one on top of the other.

A month ago, the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR "On liability for the release of low-quality or incomplete products and for non-compliance with

mandatory standards by industrial enterprises". The two-point decree was formulated so simply and clearly that it was completely incomprehensible why it did not produce any results. Marriage continued to mangle military equipment.

Stalin demanded the Decree to himself and once again carefully read it:

"1. Establish that the release of low-quality or incomplete industrial products and the release of products in violation of mandatory standards is an anti-state crime, tantamount to sabotage.

2. For the release of low-quality and incomplete products and for the release of products in violation of mandatory standards - directors, chief engineers and heads of technical control departments should be brought to trial and, by a court sentence, subjected to imprisonment for a term of 5 to 8 years.

Reading the decree, Stalin realized his mistake. Dipping his pen into the inkwell, he crossed out the last digits with a sharp movement and wrote "from 10 to 15 years" at the top.

On August 15, the Germans took to the air the available forces of all three air fleets: 801 bombers and 1149 fighters. The 5th Air Fleet, operating from Scandinavian airfields, sent about 150 aircraft into battle, for some reason believing that the northeast of England would be completely defenseless. To the great surprise of the Germans, at least seven squadrons of British fighters rushed to intercept them. Thirty German bombers were shot down in a matter of minutes of battle. The rest turned back, failing to shoot down a single Englishman. On this, the fighting of the 5th fleet in the sky of England are over.

In the south, German pilots were more successful, breaking through the British air defense system almost to London. Four aircraft factories in Krydon were destroyed by bombs, five airfields were put out of action. But all this came at a cost. Germans lost 75 aircraft.

On August 17, the Germans lost 71 aircraft. The Ju-87 and Stuka dive bombers, which brilliantly paved the way for tanks in Poland and France, turned out to be decoy ducks here, easy prey for British fighters. Goering had no choice but to withdraw these low-speed bombers from the battle, which reduced the strength of the German bomber aviation by about a third.

Moscow closely followed all these events.

According to Stalin, the time has come to fulfill the obligations assumed to "spray" the British fleet before the invasion. Never forgetting anything, Stalin remembered that the German auxiliary cruiser Komet had been anchored near Kolguev Island for a month, which he promised to lead by the Northern Sea Route to the Pacific Ocean.

He understood the responsibility and risk that he was taking on by escorting the Nazi warship along the entire Siberian coast on the eve of the inevitable clash with Germany for hegemony in Europe, and therefore hesitated, waiting for further developments.

While Stalin hesitated, the crew of the Comet, changing the parking lot every other day, trained hard. Finally, in order to disguise his future intentions, Stalin decided to once again demonstrate his friendship to Hitler and ordered the cruiser to be escorted.



On August 18, according to the order received from Papanin, the Komet weighed anchor and headed for Matochkin Shar, where the Lenin icebreaker was waiting for it. The historic voyage of the auxiliary cruiser Komet has begun!

## Chapter 6

On August 19, Goering held a meeting of the commanders of the air fleets and their chiefs of staff at his residence at Carinhall. "We have reached a decisive period in the air war against England," declared the Reich Marshal. - The most important task is to defeat enemy aircraft. The main goal is the destruction of British fighters. The most experienced pilot himself, an ace of the First World War, even then declared a war criminal, Goering was right. The British fighter aircraft were dwindling, and the valor and combat skill of the British pilots could not compensate for their small numbers. It seemed that one more effort - and air supremacy over England would be won. Everyone was waiting for the weather to improve.

And Hitler looked anxiously at the Balkans. Romania, as if nothing had happened, continued to supply oil to the British. Those, in turn, brazenly used the Greek territorial waters, which Greece did not seem to notice. But as soon as the Italian ships entered the Aegean Sea, Greece itself raised such a scandal about the violation of its sovereignty that it seemed that Athens and Rome were about to grab each other's throats. And when the Italian formation almost managed to intercept the tankers, the English cruiser Sydney jumped out of the Greek territorial waters with a division of destroyers and drowned the Italian cruiser and two destroyers in a short battle.

Romania did not seem to understand how indecently she behaves and what she risks! On the one hand, she calls on the Germans for help against the advancing Stalinist hordes, and on the other hand, she sells oil to the British.

And Stalin was already happily rubbing his hands. No intelligence reports are needed - it was enough to read Soviet newspapers, which in unison call for assistance to the "fraternal" peoples. The transfer of German troops to the east, in case of any surprises, was extremely slow. Hitler harassed Brauchitsch and Halder with endless reminders, constantly in a sullen mood.

Stalin, on the contrary, is in an excellent mood. Thanks to the pact, which, by the way, is only a year old, much has been accomplished. And how much more can be done! General Zhukov reports that the units entrusted to him are not yet quite ready to throw into the Balkans, but combat skill is growing and the troops will reach the peak of readiness by mid-September. The new Chief of the General Staff Meretskov is thinking over a mobilization plan. How to carry it out so that the Germans do not notice anything? I had to part with Shaposhnikov. He is old-fashioned and does not quite understand the basics of Marxist-Leninist military science - the most advanced in the world. Yes, and Timoshenko can't work with him in any way .. Shaposhnikov has already been sent to the Bialystok "balcony" to build URs, but not very intensively. Let the Germans see that we are preparing for defense. While everything is going well, I wish the Germans would land in England!

Why doesn't Hitler land? You have to push it a little.

On August 23, an editorial in the newspaper Pravda, marking the anniversary of the pact, wrote: "The signing of the pact put an end to hostility between Germany and the USSR ... We are neutral, neutral thanks to the pact. This pact also gave Germany a huge advantage, since she can be completely sure of calm in her eastern

boundaries."

Indeed, everything is calm on the Soviet-German border, except for the feverish construction of airfields and warehouses on the Soviet side. The situation on the Soviet-Romanian border has already reached unprecedented tension. Both sides daily report incidents, skirmishes of border guards, violations of air and sea space. And before the landing in England, scheduled for September 15, which is so awaited in Moscow, there are still three weeks ...

On the night of August 23-24, the weather over the English Channel improved significantly, enabling Goering to resume the air offensive. The purpose of the night raid was to be aircraft factories and fuel depots on the outskirts of London. It was a fateful night that broke all Goering's plans for the final destruction of enemy aircraft. It is believed that the Germans made an accidental navigational error. But the fact remains - instead of the intended specific goals, Goering's pilots dropped bombs on the center of the English capital, destroying several houses and causing minor civilian casualties. Enraged, the British, deciding that the bombing of residential areas of their capital was a deliberate act, quickly planned and carried out an act of retaliation.

On August 25, 1940, the first bombs fell on Berlin. The material damage caused by them, of course, was negligible, but the moral effect was terrible.

Berlin was surrounded by three air defense rings. The firing of anti-aircraft guns merged into a continuous roar and howl, but not a single enemy aircraft could be shot down. Everyone who needs it saw that night that German cities were practically defenseless against air strikes. Together with the bombs, leaflets rained down from the British bombers. "The war started by Hitler will continue as long as Hitler is in power and will end only after the destruction of Hitler and his regime." Combined with the bomb blasts, it was very effective propaganda.

On August 28 and 29, Berlin was again bombed. This time there were casualties among the population. According to official figures, ten people were killed and 29 were injured.

On August 29, in the Upper Belvedere, the summer residence of Prince Eugene of Savoy, the foreign ministers met to resolve the Hungarian-Romanian territorial disputes: Ribbentrop, Ciano, the Hungarian Chaco and the head of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, Manoilescu. When the latter saw the prepared map, on which almost all of Transylvania was painted over in Hungarian colors, he lost consciousness and collapsed on ... the round table of the conference. An urgently called doctor brought the Romanian minister to his senses, after which the agreement was signed.

All this led to an unprecedented explosion of patriotism in Romania and ... the abdication of the king. The eighteen-year-old son of the king, Mihai (the same one whom Stalin would later grant for some unknown reason with the Order of Victory), immediately handed over the Romanian oil region to the Germans under protection in order to protect this region "from the intervention of third states."

Stalin had never seen such a fiddle under his nose in his life. It was a terrible humiliation. The leader's anger was terrible. In retaliation for such an attitude, he immediately ordered the Comet to be stopped and returned to Murmansk, and if he refused, to be drowned. Interesting, what to heat? The Shch-423 submarine assigned for this purpose, allegedly being ferried to Vladivostok, was hopelessly behind due to a propeller failure near the support vessel. The frightened local authorities, knowing full well who gave the order to return the German cruiser, tried to scare the commander with the presence of the Japanese and Americans in the Bering Strait. Nothing, Eissen smiled thinly, the Japanese are friends, the Americans are neutral.

In the note that followed from Moscow, undisguised irritation could be seen. Bandits already

started squabbling over prey, prejudging the inevitability of an open fight.

While Moscow and Berlin were exchanging reproaches, three versions of the plan of attack on the USSR came to the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, 1st Quartermaster General Paushos, whose name in Russia is familiar to every schoolchild.

Accepting the secret documents, the newly appointed general signed the secret documentation journal: received on September 3, 1940.

The day before, in Moscow, Stalin was persuaded to cancel the order to stop the German cruiser Komet. The new Chief of the General Staff, General of the Army Meretskov, tried to prove to Stalin that, in fact, nothing terrible had happened, you just need to correct the "Thunderstorm" taking into account the new realities.

Stalin listens to his chief of the general staff, agreeing, in principle, with him in everything. A year of war has already passed, and how much has been accomplished! Molotov was right when closing the session of the Supreme Soviet: "The Soviet Union has achieved great success, but it does not intend to stop there." By the way, perhaps it is worth responding to Germany's request for assistance and sending them bombs to continue the air war. Our task is to assist the Germans in every possible way in their struggle against England.

Hitler personally ordered Goering, as retribution for the bombing of Berlin, to shift the strike from British aviation to British cities. an average of 1,000 aircraft per day. Despite the desperate resistance of the British pilots, the German numerical superiority was beginning to show. Five British forward airfields in the south of the country were so badly damaged that they could hardly be used. The communication system was broken).

In the critical two weeks from August 24 to September 6, the British lost 466 fighters destroyed or seriously damaged. In this case, 103 pilots were killed and 128 were seriously injured - about a quarter of the available staff. During the same period, the Luftwaffe lost 385 aircraft (214 fighters and 138 bombers).

On September 4, Hitler unexpectedly decides to speak to the masses. The British air raids apparently played a significant role in this, so that it became necessary once again to remind the German people that England was finished long ago, and at the same time to sum up the first year of the war, filled with brilliant victories of German weapons.

Slowly pronouncing each word, Hitler spoke, ringing with the metal of his voice:

"Now Mr. Churchill is demonstrating his new original idea - night air raids. Mr. Churchill thought of this, not because the raids now promise high efficiency, but because his air force cannot fly over Germany in the daytime ... while German planes appear over England every day ...

Now we will respond to every night raid with a night raid! If British aircraft drop two, three or four tons of bombs on us, then in one night we will drop 150, 250, 300 or 400 tons of bombs on them!!!

On Saturday, September 7, 625 bombers and 648 fighters took off from German airfields in northern France and Holland, roaring with engines. The target was London. Formed in crane wedges, the squadrons went north, disappearing into the approaching twilight.

The raid was terrible. The previous bombings of Warsaw and Rotterdam can be called pinpricks in comparison with the hell that has fallen on the British capital. The entire dock area was a huge, raging whirlwind of flame. All the railroads leading from London to the south, so important for defense in the event of an invasion, were blocked. One of the districts of the capital - Silvertown - was in the ring of fire. The population had to be evacuated by water.

After dark, at about 20.00, the second wave of German bombers began to operate, then the third. The bombardment continued uninterruptedly until half past five on the morning of 8 September. Alarms blared on all British airwaves. The General Staff, the command of the fleet of the mother country, Churchill himself and his closest advisers were sure that such a deadly bombardment meant that the invasion was inevitable and would happen in the next 24 hours.

The dawn of September 8 brought to light a terrible picture of the burning capital of England. Oceans of flame raged over the city. The sirens of fire engines and ambulances blared. Despite all the courage and dedication, firefighters could not localize the flames. The number of dead and wounded grew.

On Sunday, September 8, at 19.00 German bombers reappeared over London. The bombardment continued throughout the night. The unextinguished fires of the previous bombardment were filled with new oceans of flame. Houses and factories were destroyed. People died. The first figures came in: 900 people died in two nights, 2,500 were injured.

On Monday, September 9, everything happened again. More than 200 German bombers dropped bombs on the British capital all night long, no longer looking for military targets and dropping bombs anywhere.

German bombers met almost no resistance over London, since almost all the formations of the British Air Force were concentrated in the south of the country, expecting an invasion from minute to minute. Therefore, British aviation concentrated all its attention on the ports of Northern France, inflicting blow after blow on them.

On the morning of September 11, Churchill addressed the nation by radio. Warning that an invasion of England could occur at any moment, the Prime Minister said: "We must regard the next week as the most important in our history. It is comparable to the days when the Spanish Armada appeared in the strait ... Or when Nelson stood between us and Napoleon's Grand Army.

On September 13, Italian troops finally went on the offensive and invaded Egypt. The British are retreating all along the front. The offensive is supported by a powerful Italian fleet, which will prompt the British to urgently transfer large forces of their fleet to the Mediterranean Sea, exposing the mother country.

On September 14, in Berlin, Hitler held a conference with representatives of the high command of the armed forces.

Hitler was gloomy, but calm and focused. "A successful landing followed by the occupation of England," he said, "would have ended the war in a very short time. True, England is already dying of exhaustion, so there is no need to tie the landing to any specific date ... But a long war is also undesirable.

The fleet has already reached the required state. The actions of the Luftwaffe are generally beyond praise. Four or five days of good weather will bring decisive results ... We have a good chance of bringing England to her knees.

Hitler paused and announced the decision: "Despite all the successes, the prerequisites for Operation Sea Lion have not yet been created."

Summarizing what has been said, the Fuhrer summed up the following:

"It is necessary to step up air strikes. Our air strikes had a stunning effect. Even if victory in the air is achieved by continuing the raids for another 10-12 days, there may be mass panic and hysteria in England. This will be joined by the fear of landing. The fear of landing should not disappear."

Hitler said the most important thing in the last phrase. All his thoughts were occupied with how to make Stalin believe in the inevitability of an invasion of England and at the same time not pay too high a price. But is it possible to constantly postpone the landing, while maintaining the conviction of everyone in its inevitability? The situation is complex. For three months now, Stalin has been carrying out endless maneuvers along the entire western border, as close as possible to a combat situation. At any moment you can expect surprises.

The directions of the main attacks were clearly outlined: against Romania with the simultaneous occupation of Bulgaria and from the Bialystok balcony - to Warsaw, with access to the Oder. Auxiliary strikes against East Prussia and Finland are expected. The forces of the Germans in this direction are completely insufficient to counter Moscow.

In order to justify the confidence of the Fuhrer and prove to all skeptics who is the master in the sky over England, Goering decided to make an unprecedented daytime raid on London on September 15th. On this day, around noon, about 200 bombers appeared over the English Channel under cover of at least 600 fighters. All this armada, shining with duralumin and glass of cabins under the rays of the dim September sun, went in menacing wedges towards the capital of Britain. This Sunday September day was destined to be the day of the most bitter disappointment in the capabilities of the Luftwaffe. Effectively using radar, the British command clearly made it clear to the doubters that the British aviation was not only not destroyed, but became stronger than it was.

Formations of British fighters in an unexpected number for the Germans, coming out from under the sun, intercepted the German armada on the way to the capital. Only a few bombers managed to break through to London. The rest were either scattered or destroyed.

On September 16, in the Antwerp area, German troops conducted a major landing exercise. Personnel and military equipment were loaded onto transports and barges, which, under the cover of destroyers, went to sea in order, after passing about 50 miles, to land troops on one of the sections of the Dutch coast, reminiscent of the relief of the coast of southern England. Unexpectedly, British bombers hit the oncoming convoy. Within minutes, the convoy was destroyed. Losses in personnel exceeded the planned losses of the first wave of landings during a real landing in England.

The message about the unsuccessful exercises came to Moscow in the midst of an operational meeting, which was held by Stalin with the chief of the general staff Meretskov and People's Commissar of Defense Timoshenko, who urgently flew to Moscow from Kyiv.

On the agenda was the most important issue of accurately determining the date of the start of Operation Thunderstorm. Everyone agreed that October 1 would be the ideal date to complete the operation before the start of winter. However, there were problems. If the Germans, as they had planned, begin landing in the twentieth of September, then it is a little early to invade Europe on October 1. Better than 10. With a simultaneous auxiliary strike on the rest of Finland.

The army, in principle, is ready, although, of course, there is an acute shortage of tanks and vehicles. The fleet, which has begun building giant battleships and battlecruisers, is eating up stock steel, disrupting the tank program. The General Staff recently submitted to him, Stalin, a detailed calculation of the "Thunderstorm" with an indication of the expected losses. The operation was supposed to involve 5 million people, 11 thousand tanks, 35,000 guns and 9-10 thousand aircraft. The duration of the operation is 3-4 months. Losses in people are tentatively estimated at one and a half million people. In fact, the General Staff believed that two million, but did not dare to give this figure to Stalin.

On September 17, General Paulus, who had been working for the past two weeks without sleep or rest, reported to Colonel-General Halder his preliminary calculations regarding the attack on the USSR. The operation is risky, but possible. To do this, it is necessary to concentrate at least 110-120 divisions on the borders with the USSR and achieve strategic surprise, which, in turn, requires extensive measures to misinform the enemy. All Russian armies are deployed for the offensive. The Bialystok and Lemberg balconies look especially seductive, where a huge number of Russian forces are concentrated, a gigantic network of warehouses and airfields, and headquarters at all levels. Meanwhile, both of these balconies are easily destroyed by much smaller forces, since, in essence, they do not have any defense.  
have.

The destruction of the Russian armies on the "balconies" will make it possible to enter the operational space with the rapid achievement of the final points of the operation: Moscow, Leningrad and the Volga, somewhere south of Stalingrad.

Hitler ordered that the necessary documents be presented to him on the available aviation forces. He himself will decide how to use these forces.

"Berlin, September 16, 1940 to Schulenberg.

Please visit Herr Molotov on the afternoon of September 21 and, unless you receive other instructions by that time, inform him orally and, as it were, by the way, preferably in a conversation on some random topic, the following:

The continued penetration of British aircraft into the airspace of Germany and the territories occupied by it forces the defense of certain installations to be strengthened, primarily in the north of Norway. Part of this reinforcement is the transfer of an anti-aircraft artillery battalion there, along with its support. When searching for transfer routes, it turned out that the least difficult route for this purpose would be through Finland.

Ribbentrop".

On September 19, Hitler issued an official order to suspend the concentration of the invasion fleet in the ports of Northern France, and to disperse the ships and vessels located there in order to "minimize the loss of ship tonnage from enemy air strikes." The landing is again postponed, this time for an indefinite time - somewhere in the spring of 1941.

The commanders in northern France are bombarding Halder with telephone calls - the situation is becoming simply unbearable due to the uncertainty of the tasks assigned to their troops. What is the exact start date for Operation Sea Lion? There is no need to panic, the chief of the general staff reassures them, the Fuhrer will make a decision. The invasion has been postponed mainly due to unfavorable weather, and favorable weather in the strait will not come until next summer. By this time, it will be possible to put the entire materiel of the fleet in order, and most importantly, to put into operation two newest battleships - Bismarck and Tirpitz. , superior in their operational and tactical characteristics to all British ships of this class.

Reassuring the commanders in the West, Halder looks more and more anxiously at the map of the eastern frontier. Intelligence constantly reports on the concentration of Soviet troops along the new border with Finland.

The Soviet Union has been in a militaristic frenzy for half a year now. From the Baltic to the Black Sea, exercises after exercises are being held in all districts in a situation as close as possible to combat conditions. Stalin, apparently having lost all caution, openly demonstrates his passionate desire to finally wait for the invasion of England.

And in the east, Germany has only 25 divisions. Of these, three are tank, one motorized and one cavalry, the rest are infantry.

Only yesterday they were organized organizationally into Army Group B under the command of Field Marshal von Bock, nominally divided into three armies. The balance of forces is such that if Stalin started an offensive now, it is not difficult to imagine what could happen.

On September 24, Marshal Timoshenko arrived in the Kiev Special Military District, whose troops, according to the Thunderstorm plan, were supposed to strike at regular intervals, cutting off Germany from Romanian oil, and by and large from the Balkans.

For the arrival of the People's Commissar, the exercises of the 99th Infantry Division were prepared in conditions as close as possible to real combat training.

Exactly at the appointed time, the artillery roared. The cannonade went on for two hours. Exactly on schedule, bombers appeared over the battlefield, covered by fighters. The ground reared up and trembled under a hail of military bombs. For a whole hour, replacing each other, three waves of bombers ironed the defense of the "enemy".

The spectacle was impressive. It seemed that the avalanche of tanks and infantry, following the barrage of fire, would no longer stop until the very coast of the Atlantic Ocean.

The Commissar was pleased. He had long ago outlined the 99th division in order to make it an exemplary unit, to which all the armed forces were to be equal.

The commander of the 99th Infantry Division was General Vlasov.

People's Commissar Timoshenko awarded Vlasov with a gold watch. A little later, Stalin himself ordered Vlasov to be awarded the Order of Lenin, and the 99th division to be awarded the challenge Red Banner of the Red Army.

The newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda for several days (from September 23 to 25, 1940) in a series of articles glorified the 99th division, noting the very high combat training of the personnel and the skillful exactingness of the command. Articles were published with loud headlines: "New methods of combat training", "Commander of the advanced division", "Party conference of the 99th SD", etc. These articles were studied in political classes throughout the Red Army. The outstanding merits of General Vlasov were especially emphasized, who "under conditions of incredible exactingness, distinguished himself in front of all others with his super-demanding.

For twenty-one years of service in the Red Army, he acquired the most valuable quality for the military - an understanding of the people whom he is called upon to educate, teach, prepare for battle ... And he knows how to reveal and encourage in people the zeal for service.

(Created by Timoshenko and Zhukov, General Vlasov secured immortality for himself. He is not

will never be forgotten: and those who consider Vlasov the greatest traitor in all of Russian history, making his very name synonymous with treason; and those who consider Andrei Andreevich Vlasov the greatest hero in all of Russian history, who was not afraid to openly go over to the enemy and throw a daring challenge to tyranny with his famous Smolensk Declaration. Executed by Stalin with medieval cruelty, General Vlasov passed into eternity as an unsolved riddle).

The echoes of the global maneuvers carried out by the Red Army, unprecedented in their scale, rolled around the world in the roar of explosions of shells, bombs and mines exploding over a vast territory from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea.

More distinctly than others, the thunder of the "Thunderstorm" approaching from the east was naturally heard in Berlin, where representatives of Italy and Japan began to gather for the upcoming signing of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Triple Alliance. The Italians and Japanese did not fail to find out from Hitler, who met them, how does he feel about such a loud saber-rattling coming from Moscow? The Fuhrer was outwardly calm. Knowing full well that Stalin was preparing his army for the impending landing of German troops in England, the Fuhrer was still nervous, unable to predict Stalin's reaction when he learned that the long-awaited landing was again postponed indefinitely. What if Stalin realizes that he is being fooled, and, not expecting a German invasion of England, will launch an offensive in the Balkans or in Poland? Or here and there at the same time? We must try to suggest another way to Stalin.

The activity of Soviet intelligence in Iran and Afghanistan had long been noticed by the Germans. It was also noticed that this activity has recently increased dramatically. "It's just

exactly what is needed!" decided in Berlin.

But for now, it is necessary to reassure the Kremlin about the forthcoming conclusion of the Triple Alliance.

Ribbentrop telegraphed von Toppelskirch, chargé d'affaires in Moscow (Count Schulenburg was on vacation).

"Berlin, September 25, 1940 No. 1746

state secret

Urgently

Top secret

Only for chargé d'affaires in person

Please visit Molotov on Thursday, September 26, and on my behalf inform him that, in view of the cordial relations that exist between Germany and the Soviet Union, I would like to inform him in advance, strictly confidentially, of the following:

1. The warmongering agitation in America, which at the present stage of the final defeat of England sees its last outlet in the extension and continuation of the war, has led to negotiations between the two Axis Powers on the one hand, and Japan on the other; the result of this, presumably within the next few days, will be the signing of a military alliance between the three powers.

2. This alliance has from the outset and consistently been directed exclusively against the American warmongers. Of course, this is not written directly in the contract, but can be unmistakably deduced from its content.



3. The treaty, of course, does not pursue any aggressive aims towards America. Its sole purpose is only to bring to life those elements who insist on America's entry into the war, convincingly demonstrating to them that if they do enter the war, they will automatically have three great powers as their opponents.

4. From the very beginning of these negotiations, the three contracting parties fully agreed that their alliance would in no way affect the relations of each of them with the Soviet Union.

6. Taking this opportunity, please tell Herr Molotov ... that I intend to soon write a personal letter to Herr Stalin, in which ... the German point of view on the present political situation will be frankly and confidentially stated. In addition, the letter will contain an invitation to Berlin of Herr Molotov, whose return visit, after my two visits to Moscow, is expected by us and with whom I would like to discuss important problems concerning the establishment of common political goals for the future.

Ribbentrop". (Received in Moscow on September 26, 1940 at 12.05)

While Berlin was preparing for the signing of the Tripartite Pact, while employees of the German Foreign Ministry were ciphering Ribbentrop's telegram and transmitting it to Moscow, and feverishly deciphering it at the German embassy, air raid sirens were blaring all over Germany - British heavy bombers were more and more confidently biting into German airspace, clearly showing that, despite all ambitions, the air defense of the Reich is very far from perfect.

During September 25 and 26, one of the main bases of the German fleet in Kiel was subjected to particularly powerful air strikes, where, in addition to many other warships, the only two so far German battleships Scharhorst and Gneisenau, as well as located in the eternal completion of the (never completed) aircraft carrier Graf Zeppelin. And although these raids did not cause much damage, except for a few destroyed warehouses and damaged ships, the very fact of the British bombing of the main base of the Kriegsmarine with impunity did not at all inspire those to whom imperial propaganda buzzed all ears about a defeated and defeated England, the capture of which was only a matter of two or three days of good weather.

On September 27, 1940, the Triple Alliance between Germany, Italy and Japan was signed in Berlin in an atmosphere of "stern and restrained solemnity". The Japanese, who did not at all want to bind themselves to any kind of alliances, insisted on a purely Asian vagueness of the text, which read: "... the contracting parties provide each other with mutual support in case one of the parties is attacked by the state, which has not yet involved in the war." Everyone interpreted these words as a warning to the United States, but it was also clear to everyone else that now, in the event of an invasion of Europe, Stalin would have to reckon with the prospect of opening a second front on his eastern borders.

On the eve of the charge d'affaires of Germany in Moscow, as he was ordered, he asked for an appointment with the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR Molotov. After some bureaucratic delays, he was received by Molotov at 22.00 Moscow time.

The Commissar was restrainedly friendly. After carefully listening to Ribbentrop's message, he noted with particular satisfaction the 6th point. Suddenly changing the subject of the conversation, Molotov asked Toppelskirch how to understand the latest German-Finnish agreement,

which, according to the Finnish communique, gives German troops the right of passage to Norway through Finland?

Tippelskirch replied that he had no information on this matter, and turned the conversation back to the forthcoming signing of the Triple Alliance. However, we have the right, continues Molotov, not only to be warned about this, but also to get acquainted with all the secret protocols attached to the treaty. This desire of the Soviet government, Molotov explains, is based on Articles 3 and 4 of the non-aggression treaty concluded with Germany. The Soviet Union understands these articles in the same way. Particularly article 4. If the Soviet Union misunderstands its rights, then let the German government explain its position on this matter.

But Chargé d'Affaires von Tippelskirch can do nothing but inform Berlin of this desire of the Soviet government.

Molotov again refers to the Soviet-German treaty, the secret protocols to which clearly refer to spheres of influence. Tippelskirch invariably reminded the people's commissar that he was instructed only to inform the Soviet government about the upcoming signing of the Triple Alliance, and about everything else he immediately informs his government, since he himself does not have any information on these issues ...

On September 30, Pravda reported on the signing of the Triple Alliance in Berlin, pretending that this insignificant event did not deserve much attention.

On October 2, 1940, Stalin ordered the construction of the battleship Sovetskaya Belorussia in Molotovsk to be suspended, which should later be included in the official decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks "On the military shipbuilding plan for 1941", which is being redone for the third time. It is so hard for Stalin to part with heavy ships. Not enough metal. Almost all stock metal is consumed by the tank and artillery program. Army applications for tanks and artillery are simply incredible. But here both Meretskov and Timoshenko held firm: without (at least) triple superiority in tanks, aircraft and artillery, they cannot guarantee the success of Operation Thunderstorm.

Meanwhile, the air offensive against England continued, albeit at a slower pace. The British noted with satisfaction that every day fewer enemy aircraft appeared in their airspace. But still there were enough of them to keep the air defense service and the population in suspense.

On October 5, a half-ton bomb exploded in the square near the ancient building of the English Parliament. The huge, stained-glass window of the "mother of all parliaments" had been blown out, turning from a unique work of art into a huge, ugly hole. Fragments of an air bomb hit the bronze equestrian statue of King Richard the Lionheart, which stood in the square in front of the Parliament building. The sword in the legendary knight king's hand was bent but not broken, which everyone considered a good omen...

Another German bomb, breaking through the dome of the beautiful Cathedral of St. Paul, exploded, damaging and throwing debris at the precious altar of the 15th century. All this was very impressive, but every day it cost more and more. The Germans admitted that in September they lost 582 aircraft over England. Dominance in the air was never won, and there was nothing to say about dominance at sea.

On October 5, the newspaper Pravda published an article about the defenders of the "London sky", the tone of which caused a sensation. It hinted that England was waging a "people's war", and in anti-aircraft crews "the spirit of camaraderie and patriotism reigns." Not once since the beginning of the war has a warm word appeared in the Soviet press either about the Poles, or the French, or the British! In what unexpected way Stalin expresses his

discontent! It is clear what the Asian fox is hinting at! Of course, the newspaper article cannot be seen as a change in the Kremlin's policy, but should be understood as a warning about the possibility of an alliance with England! Damn problems! Planes are dying, the fleet is idle, and an ally! ..

Cherbourg, where Hitler planned to relocate all the combat-ready ships of his fleet, was subjected to daily attacks from the sea and air. And in the Mediterranean, the Italian fleet continued shamefully hiding in bases, completely giving the sea to the British.

The huge Italian fleet - 6 battleships, 8 heavy and 25 light cruisers - is paralyzed by fear of the red cross of St. George and his authority. But at present, the surface ships of the German fleet are not able to act effectively against the British until the materiel is put in order.

But the realities are such that if Stalin started military operations now, there are no real forces in the East that could be opposed to his gigantic military machine.

The maneuvers of the Kyiv Special Military District, unprecedented in scale, have just ended, the course of which was controlled by the people's commissar of defense, Marshal Timoshenko himself. No less large-scale maneuvers of the Belarusian Military District, commanded by one of the most experienced Soviet tank strategists, General Pavlov, are still ongoing. The maneuvers are controlled by the Chief of the Operations Department of the General Staff, General Vatutin. The exercises are also continuing in the huge Leningrad military district, where, according to the latest information, Timoshenko went. The district is set in motion and again clearly aimed at Finland. Offensive techniques are being practiced in all districts. Breakthrough of the enemy's defenses, followed by the rapid exit of large masses of tanks and cavalry into the operational space.

Judging by the concentration of units involved, as well as by the attention that the Minister of War (People's Commissar) personally pays to the exercises, Stalin aimed the main blow at the Balkans and Finland.

On the border with the General Government (Poland), where the construction of fortifications is underway, apparently, the Kremlin wants to limit itself, at least at the first stage, to defensive-deterrent actions if the movement to the Balkans leads to an armed clash with us. However, the presence of forces and means on the Bialystok balcony with equal probability implies the possibility of a massive offensive in this sector as well.

Leaning back comfortably in his chair, arms folded across his chest, Hitler listens inattentively to the Chief of the General Staff. All this is understandable. Or maybe really try to occupy England before the eastern campaign?

Halder shakes his head doubtfully. There are no objective data, my Fuhrer, for this. On the contrary, we have information that the grouping of British troops in the south of the country is gaining strength every day.

Moreover, it must not be forgotten that as soon as we begin the landing, Stalin will immediately throw his army forward, striking from the Bialystok bridgehead to Berlin, at the same time cutting us off from Romanian oil and acquiring England as an ally.

Hitler winces. And if you manage to agree with Stalin? About what? For example, it will be possible to convince him to join the Axis countries on the terms of the division of the former British Empire. So that he abandoned his ambitious plans in Europe, primarily in the Balkans, and turned south towards Iran and Afghanistan, towards the non-freezing Persian Gulf with its oil wealth.

Halder disagrees: we cannot long endure the concentration of such a huge army on our eastern frontiers. It is necessary to destroy Stalin's military machine in the very near future, without delaying further than until May of next year. This is the opinion of the entire command of the land army.

To destroy, grumbles Hitler, is easy to destroy. But to make this machine work for us, gradually destroying the Bolshevik ideology, is more difficult. This is already an area in which Halder does not understand anything, this is already the area of politics. The chief of the general staff did not know that at that very moment a letter signed by Ribbentrop had already been sent from Berlin to Stalin, which, in particular, contained a direct appeal to join the Axis powers:

"... the historical task of the four powers is to harmonize their long-term political goals and, by delimiting their spheres of interest on a global scale, direct the future of their peoples along the right path."

At the end of the letter, Ribbentrop invites Molotov to visit Germany, where the Berlin godfather, without resorting to an unreliable method of communication on paper, "will personally express his views on the future nature of relations" with the Kremlin godfather.

The letter sent through Schulenberg was to be delivered personally to Stalin no later than October 17th. There were good reasons for this. Despite the composure of the Wehrmacht command, which believed that Stalin would not take any active action before the start of Operation Sea Lion, through the channels of Heydrich, whose information almost always differed from that of Admiral Canaris, data was received that plunged Hitler and his inner circle into a state of panic. Information received from a source close to the leadership of the Red Army Air Force said that, expecting an invasion of England in the twentieth of September, Stalin gave a secret directive to the troops to launch an offensive along the entire border line from the Barents to the Black Sea on October 22. The directive stated that final orders would be given no later than October 19, and in the absence of such, "troops to act in accordance with existing orders and instructions."

The facts showed that the Red Army was at the peak of its operational readiness.

## Chapter 7

Stalin and Molotov carefully studied Ribbentrop's voluminous message. There was no doubt. A small Stalinist "demarchik" in Pravda with a London anti-aircraft battery did not go unnoticed in Berlin. The entire letter from the German minister is riddled with anxiety about possible turns in Anglo-Soviet relations. There is a lot of room for maneuver here!

The issue with Finland is more delicate. Of course, it is beneficial for the Germans to build up their forces in Norway for the upcoming invasion of England, but Soviet intelligence categorically states that German troops do not appear in Norway, but dissolve in the Finnish forests. What this all means needs to be clarified, since here the Germans are clearly violating the agreement on the division of spheres of influence. It is necessary to make it absolutely clear to them that Finland is nothing more than a province of Russia, lost in 1918 under the pressure of the same Germans.

Then there are the problems of the Balkans. First of all - Romania and Bulgaria, where the interests of the Soviet Union are obvious. And German troops are already flowing into Romania and are expected

Italian. The Germans in this matter simply lied! At first, they talked about the intrigues of British intelligence, trying to destabilize the entire region, drag Romania into the war and seize oil fields. Then a representative of the German Foreign Ministry said that the rumors about sending German troops were nonsense. And he immediately denied himself, saying that exemplary German units were sent to Romania for training purposes.

In Bulgaria, some incomprehensible negotiations are underway with the Germans. It looks like Hitler is pulling Bulgaria into the Axis. Intelligence reports that at one of the meetings of the secret State Council, the Bulgarian Tsar Boris exclaimed in despair: "My God, my God! What do we do? From the West - Hitler, from the East - Stalin! Where are we to go? Perhaps it's better to go to Hitler than to the Bolsheviks!"

But the most interesting information comes from Germany. Having failed to invade England before the start of the autumn season, Hitler wants to use the time until next summer to finally sweep the British out of the Mediterranean. With the simultaneous capture of the Suez Canal by the Italians, it is planned to capture Gibraltar either by the Germans, passed through Spanish territory, or by the Germans and the Spaniards together, if it is possible to negotiate with Franco.

The Italian fleet is preparing to sharply increase activity and is only waiting for the commissioning of several new ships, including two more battleships, surpassing everything that the British have in their operational and tactical data. In addition, a plan was developed for a sharp intensification of the actions of the German fleet on British communications. But most interestingly, there is evidence that Hitler, irritated by the slowness of the Italians in Egypt, is preparing an expeditionary force for operations in North Africa.

Franco, who owed his triumph in the civil war to the huge military supplies of Germany and Italy, after the defeat of France, he himself began to ask for participation in the war, hoping to round off his African colonial possessions at the expense of the French. Like all other dictators, Franco had an insatiable appetite for booty, especially if it came cheap.

It was in order to remind Franco of his desire to enter the war that Hitler arrived on October 23 at the Franco-Spanish border. However, from the moment when Franco was eager to enter the war on the side of Germany, enough time had passed for the caudillo to manage to suppress his first emotional outburst. The landing in England never took place, and Hitler's words that England was "completely defeated" did not make much impression on the cunning Spaniard. Spanish intelligence quite accurately determined that the defeat of England is still very far away, and if we consider that behind the British back the powerful silhouette of the United States is becoming more and more clearly looming, then no matter how the opposite happens.

Hitler stated that he wanted Spain to enter the war in January 1941 and attack Gibraltar on January 10, promising to send major specialists in the destruction of forts from the air. Franco replied that the Spanish army was not able to prepare for war so quickly, but if it came to war, then he did not need any specialists from Germany - he could handle it himself.

The situation becomes incomprehensible. More and more forces and means are rushing to fight against England, which has sharply stepped up its actions, clearly exceeding the reasonable level of a purely camouflage operation.

The flow of military equipment pouring into England from the United States will not only enable England to accumulate sufficient potential for the continuation of the war, but, as is clear as God's day, in the very near future, the United States itself will be involved in the war against Germany.

Perhaps the Fuhrer sees this opportunity and tries at the last moment to attract Stalin as an ally, because if the United States joins England, the position of Germany will become extremely complicated, not to say, will become hopeless.

Meanwhile, Hitler continues to brief the generals on his plans to crush England.

"Before spring comes," the Fuhrer emphasizes, "when we invade England, it is necessary to capture Gibraltar, Malta, the Canary and Azores, Portuguese Madeira and, if necessary, occupy Portugal." To do this, German troops will be passed through the territory of Spain and will act together with the Spanish troops, since Franco, frankly lying to Hitler, at our last meeting confirmed his desire to enter the war.

In London, in his office, Winston Churchill pondered an intelligence report citing reliable American sources. From the very beginning of Operation Sea Lion, the Germans understood the impossibility of its implementation and were not going to seriously undertake an invasion of the British Isles. All their activities in this direction, including air raids and a submarine war intensifying every day, are diversionary actions to disguise their true intentions - an attack on the Soviet Union.

This information, which came from America, seemed too pleasant a miracle to be true. For two months British intelligence had been sending messages from Moscow that Stalin intended to oppose Hitler in the very near future. On the western borders of the USSR, a huge army is being deployed and put on full alert, which, no doubt, at the present time will crush and crush everything that the Wehrmacht can oppose to it. By the will of Stalin, the country was turned into a huge military camp. Practically all industry, both heavy and light, has been transferred to a military footing.

At present, after the outbreak of hostilities in Greece, it seems absolutely inevitable that the German front will turn to the south, which puts the Wehrmacht under a flank attack from the USSR. One could hardly expect, the secret service analysts prophesied, that Stalin would not take advantage of this opportunity, especially since the main spearhead of Russia's military deployment is aimed precisely at the Balkans. The Germans, in panic and confusion, are feverishly trying to drag Stalin into negotiations in order to gain time and delay the possibility of a preemptive strike on his part ...

And so, the main premise of the British strategy of 1939 begins to come true, which provides for the inevitability of a conflict between the two totalitarian dictatorships, no matter how loudly they indulge themselves in cries of friendship. The global British secret service has capabilities far beyond those of the young, inexperienced, overly militarized, ideologically limited, if not blinkered, secret services of Russia and Germany.

In their confrontation, it is easy to make them rush at each other, blinded by disinformation, because, being essentially ordinary bandits, they have all the reflexes of such...

Experts note with interest that both armies - Hitler's and the Germans - are aimed at a rapid offensive and actually have no concept and, more surprisingly, even defensive plans, apart from improvised plans for active defense, if the situation requires it during the offensive.

Under such conditions, the army that strikes first will be able to achieve large,

say, decisive successes, since ... an army that has no plans for a retreat, starting to retreat, will inevitably turn its retreat into a stampede and chaotic flight. If it happens that Stalin strikes first, then no one can guarantee that soon the Soviet army will stand on the southern coast of the canal instead of the German one, and Europe will fall under a new tyranny, this time red, not brown, although brown is just a shade red. Or vice versa. What is worse is unknown, and who will be more difficult to fight with is also unknown. If Hitler strikes first, almost the same thing will happen, with the only difference being that in this case Hitler has nowhere to go but into the mousetrap of the vast expanses of Russia, where the German and Russian armies will furiously grind each other for at least a year.

This will, among other things, mean the gradual withdrawal of Hitler from Europe, the inevitable turn to our rear, which we, having accumulated enough strength, will strike.

British intelligence on the Continent, with its usual skill, has already spread rumors about the complete demoralization of the population caused by the German bombing, about the fatigue of the army, about the general spirit of hopelessness hovering over the British Isles.

"Once the autumn-winter storms and bad weather pass," the Times wrote, "new trials inevitably await Britain and every Briton must be ready for them. Unfortunately, the picture that we are seeing in the country and in the army does not leave much room for optimism ... The losses of our merchant fleet are growing, aviation forces are dwindling, our fleet is not able to protect the sea routes vital for the country, and it is unlikely that there is one hundred percent certainty that the royal armed forces are able to repel the inevitable German invasion next summer.

Although the military's self-confidence was encouraging, and the tone of the newspaper articles set by himself could be ignored, no one understood better than Churchill how serious the situation was and how overstretched all the forces of the country were. Local fascist organizations, although they went semi-underground after the start of the war, almost openly carried out propaganda against the continuation of the war.

The legal Communist Party, instigated by Moscow, just as openly, but with even greater peremptoryness, shouted something about an imperialist war, calling on the proletarians of all countries to unite.

But the most dangerous thing was that England was already on the verge of financial bankruptcy. Its assets, which stood at \$4.5 billion before the war, were practically used up, including private citizens' holdings in America that were confiscated and sold by His Majesty's government.

It was already clear to everyone that England would quickly be unable to continue the war without supplies from the United States. At the same time, under the "pay in cash and carry it yourself" law, she could not receive any supplies without having dollars.

Meanwhile, in Moscow, the head of the GRU, General Golikov, prepared a short briefing for Stalin on recent events.

The Germans, according to the head of the GRU, are doing everything correctly and logically.

People's Commissar Timoshenko, Chief of Staff Meretskov, as well as Malenkov and Zhdanov, who are present in the office, are expectantly silent.

Since the weather at the present time makes landings impossible, Hitler quite rightly shifts the center of gravity of operations to the Mediterranean basin, planning to clear the Mediterranean of the British before the spring-summer of next year. German plan

elegant and simple. In cooperation with Franco, Gibraltar will be captured sometime in January.

The Italians must resume the offensive in Egypt and push the British back beyond the Suez Canal. In this regard, major operations are expected of the Italian fleet, which, according to our naval attaché in Rome, is now concentrated in Taranto - on the sole of the Italian boot - and is ready to start a struggle with England for supremacy of the sea. The Italian navy is far superior in material terms to the forces that the British are at present able to devote to the Mediterranean.

Thus, the loss by the British of their positions in the Mediterranean will greatly facilitate Hitler's task of capturing the British Isles.

The hope of the British for the entry into the war of the United States is unlikely. The political situation in the United States is such that President Roosevelt, who does not have a majority in Congress, however much he would like to, cannot drag the country into hostilities on the side of England. His entire election program, which is being conducted in violation of the US Constitution, is based on the assurance of public opinion that the United States does not intend to interfere in a European war.

Italy's attack on Greece has created a fundamentally new situation in the Balkans, which opens before us the possibility of direct intervention in events. After the outbreak of hostilities, an urgent mobilization of troops was carried out by Bulgaria and Turkey, claiming part of the Greek territory. This means that an outbreak of hostilities can be expected that will cover the entire Balkans. The British had already begun landing on Greek territory. The Germans may react sharply.

Thus, Golikov sums up, until the summer of 1941, a constant increase in the volume of hostilities against England is expected, the peak of which, apparently, will be at the end of June - the beginning of July, since it was during this period in the English Channel according to meteorological observations over the past 50 years is the most favorable weather for landing. This, the head of the GRU concludes, gives us an opportunity... He looks at Stalin. Something very gloomy... Golikov selects the smoothest words: "Gives us the opportunity to take the necessary measures to further strengthen the defense capability of our Motherland."

Everyone is looking at Stalin, who is sitting gloomier than a cloud. He hasn't been feeling well lately. His routine is completely abnormal, even suicidal.

Constant night drinking in the country with their pets, turning nights into days, and days into nights, an abundance of spicy food, alcohol, excessive smoking. Stalin had already suffered a heart attack and a stroke. Predicting his own death, Professor Kogan offers Stalin to retire for at least six months and rest under the constant supervision of doctors.

A heavy head makes it impossible to respond quickly, as in the old days, to a change in the situation due to the Italian invasion of Greece. Okay, we'll figure it out later. Let Comrade Molotov go to Berlin. In early December, we will hold a conference and operational games with comrades from the Politburo and the military. Then we will decide exactly what to do.

He looks at Tymoshenko with sick eyes: "Let comrade Zhukov prepare the main report for the conference."

Nobody is surprised. Zhukov Otkryvaetsya on the main line. Him to start - to him and report. The topic of Comrade Zhukov's report is defined precisely and unambiguously:

"The nature of the modern offensive operation".



Throughout October, the report was written by the chief of staff of the Kyiv district, General Bagramyan. By November 1, as ordered, the draft report was sent to the People's Commissar. He, without reading it, handed it over to Meretskov, who carefully studied it and had to approve it. Stalin himself refused to read the report, saying that he would listen to it at the conference and discuss it during the upcoming strategic game...

On November 6, at a solemn meeting at the Bolshoi Theater on the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of the October Revolution, the main speech is made by the famous "zitz-president" of the USSR Mikhail Kalinin, whose wife is in a concentration camp, which does not prevent her husband-president from praising the immeasurable wisdom of the great leader louder than anyone else and teachers.

Commenting on Kalinin's speech, the Pravda newspaper emphasized that the people enjoy peace thanks to the wise policy of Comrade Stalin, but immediately allowed itself to ask the question: can the Soviet people look indifferently at the death of European civilization and not come to its aid, fulfilling their historical the mission of the savior of mankind? And so that no one had any doubts that the people would fulfill their historical mission, the day of November 7, 1940 was turned into a grandiose militaristic show, which neither the country nor the rest of the world had ever seen, which, it seemed, should have gotten used to the medieval imperial ferocity and splendor of military parades of the first country of the "victorious proletariat".

The embassy transmitters began to work feverishly. Military, naval and air attachés communicated to their headquarters their first impressions of the unprecedented military spectacle staged by Stalin. The headquarters were concerned not so much with reports of new types of weapons as with a more general question: for whom was this performance intended? Why did Moscow clang so loudly with its fanged mouth? Whom does she scare and to whom does she want to attach herself as a determined ally?

It was already clear to everyone that it was time for Stalin to make up his mind, that every day he had less room for maneuver and less time to decide: which side did he want to take in the war he had provoked?

Molotov's forthcoming visit to Berlin at first glance indicated that a Soviet-German military alliance was not far off. However, British intelligence analysts shrugged their shoulders skeptically. Hardly! Potential "allies" have no common goals, except that Hitler will let Stalin's troops pass through his territory and give them the honor of landing in England instead of the Wehrmacht. Or send them to North Africa to help the Italians. All this is fantastic, as well as the reverse options: Stalin lets German troops into Central Asia for a campaign in India and Iran. Both Hitler and Stalin are aimed at Europe, in particular, at the Balkans, and in general - at each other. The centripetal forces of the military and geopolitical shift inevitably push them towards each other with bayonets at the ready.

November 10, 1940 at 18.45 Molotov left Moscow for Berlin. The Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs was accompanied by a large retinue, which, in particular, included Vladimir Dekanozov - the same Dekanozov, who quite recently was Stalin's governor in Lithuania, planting communist ideals there by the usual methods of mass executions, arrests and deportations. Now he was to take up the post of Soviet ambassador in Berlin.

While Molotov's special train, consisting of several wagons of a Western European design, raced through the territory of Belarus and torn Poland to Berlin, an unexpected event occurred, which Molotov did not bother to tell, apparently considering the news not particularly interesting.

As it turned out, on the night of November 11-12, British planes, having risen from the Illustrious aircraft carrier, launched a torpedo-bomb attack on the main base of the Italian fleet in Taranto. Although there were ridiculously few aircraft - 10 torpedo bombers and 6 bombers - three Italian battleships, including the newest Littorio, on which so many hopes were placed, were disabled for a long time, and one of them, Conte da Cavour, as it turned out later, forever.

Those who still had doubts finally became quite clear that one could not count on any real help from the Italian fleet in the strategic Mediterranean plans. But there was no one else to rely on, and without a fleet, it was rather reckless to make any plans in the Mediterranean basin, since such plans smelled of adventure from a mile away.

Against the background of the burning Italian battleships, which were saved from final destruction only by the shallow waters of the bay, somehow, and without much surprise, the message was received that almost simultaneously with the attack on Taranto, the commander of the British forces in Egypt, General Wywell, whose tiny army the Italians still in October they promised to throw him out of the Suez Canal, unexpectedly made reconnaissance in force. Wywell, apparently, did not set any global goals for his troops, except to probe the enemy, but the results were stunning. Wherever the few mobile groups of the British came into contact with the enemy, the Italians either fled in panic or, most often, surrendered. Within three days, General Wywell's 38,000-strong army captured 38,000 Italians and was forced to stop to assess the situation ...

Therefore, when on a cloudy rainy morning on November 13, the Molotov train approached the Anhalt station in Berlin, there was a somewhat bewildered expression on the faces of the top leaders of the Reich who met him, which did not prevent the meeting of the head of the Soviet government from being arranged with all possible solemnity.

Molotov and Ribbentrop already knew each other too well to waste time on diplomatic "shooting". Both were well aware that they were neither the architects nor the inspirers of the foreign policy of their states, but only the conductors of the adventurous plans of their obsessive leaders, and that one careless word could cost Ribbentrop his career, and Molotov his head.

All those present at the first ministerial meeting involuntarily noted a certain hesitation with which Ribbentrop delivered his speech. But Ribbentrop was one of the first in Germany who learned about the British raid on Taranto and the catastrophe that had begun for the Italian army in the African desert. Germany, Ribbentrop announced, would bombard England day and night. German submarines would eventually be used to the full extent of their combat capabilities and finally undermine the power of Great Britain, forcing her to stop fighting. A certain anxiety in England is already noticeable, which allows us to hope for a close denouement. If England is not brought to her knees by air raids and submarine operations, Germany, as soon as the weather permits, will begin a large-scale landing on the British Isles and finish England. Only bad weather conditions prevent such an operation so far...

"England, of course, hopes for the help of the United States, whose support, however, is in question. In terms of possible ground operations, the entry of the United States into the war is of no importance to Germany. Germany and Italy will never again allow the Anglo-Saxons to land on the European continent. The help that England can get from the American fleet is also very doubtful. America, apparently, will limit itself to sending military equipment to the British, primarily aircraft. However, it's hard to say

how many of these supplies will be received by England, given the ever-increasing losses of English transport ships from the actions of the German navy. It can be assumed with a high probability that only a small part will reach England.

these supplies.

The Axis powers, militarily and politically, completely dominate continental Europe. Even France, which lost the war and must pay for it, which, by the way, the French are well aware of, pledged never to support England and de Gaulle, that quixotic conqueror of Africa. Therefore, thanks to the extraordinary strength of their positions, the Axis powers are now thinking more not about how to win the war, but about how to end the war already won. The natural desire of Germany and Italy to end the war as soon as possible prompts them to look for allies who agree with this intention. As a result, the Tripartite Alliance was concluded between Germany, Italy and Japan. In addition, he, Ribbentrop, can confidentially report that a number of other countries have declared their solidarity with the ideas of the Three Powers Pact.

The Führer is of the opinion, continues Ribbentrop, that the spheres of influence of Russia, Germany, Italy and Japan should be delimited, at least in the most general terms. The Fuehrer studied this question long and deeply and came to the following conclusion: considering the position that these four nations occupy in the world, it would be wisest of all if they, striving to expand their living space, turn to the south. Japan has already turned south, and it will take centuries for her to consolidate her territorial gains in the south.

Germany and Russia have demarcated their spheres of influence, and after the New Order is finally established in Western Europe, Germany will also begin to expand its living space in a southerly direction, that is, in the areas of the former German colonies in Central Africa. Similarly, Italy is moving south into North and East Africa. Therefore, he, the Imperial Minister of Foreign Affairs, wondered if Russia would also turn south in the future in order to obtain a natural outlet to the open sea, which is so important for Russia?

Molotov coldly asked what kind of sea did the Imperial Minister mean when he spoke of Russia's entry into the open sea?

Ribbentrop replied that, according to Germany, after the war there would be huge changes throughout the world. Germany is confident that there will be big changes in the status of the British Empire. So far, both sides have benefited from the German-Russian agreement, both Germany and Russia, which has been able to effect legitimate changes on its western frontiers.

The question now is whether they can continue to work together in the future, and whether Soviet Russia can draw the appropriate conclusions from the new order of things in the British Empire, that is, whether Russia's access to the sea through the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea will not be the most advantageous. Here, of course, the position of Turkey is important. Turkey in recent months has reduced its relations with England to the level of formal neutrality. The question is what interests Russia has in Turkey.

"When delimiting spheres of influence for a fairly long period of time, accuracy is necessary," the head of the Soviet government said harshly and sharply, "that is why I ask you to inform me of the opinion of the drafters of the Pact, or at least the opinion of the German government on this matter. Particular care is needed when delimiting the spheres of influence of Germany and Russia. Molotov pauses.

"The establishment of these spheres of influence last year," he continues, "was only partial.

a decision which, with the exception of the Finnish question, of which I intend to discuss in detail later, appears outdated and meaningless in the light of recent events and circumstances.

Ribbentrop was momentarily speechless at this unexpected turn of the conversation. If Molotov finds all the previously agreed spheres of influence "outdated and meaningless," then what new conditions will Stalin set for Germany, sandwiched between a rock and a hard place, between the stranglehold of the English naval blockade and the Russian steamroller? Glancing nervously at his watch, Ribbentrop suggests interrupting the conversation in order to prepare for a meeting with the Fuhrer. Molotov agrees with him, noting that it would be nice to have breakfast now and take a little rest from the road.

By the time of the events we are describing, neither Stalin nor Hitler had any illusions about each other and went into negotiations with the sole purpose of

to gain time until the optimal moment when it is possible to inflict such a crushing blow on the opponent, after which he will no longer rise.

Hitler scheduled a reception for the Soviet delegation at the Bellevue Hotel. The doors of the ancient palace of the Prussian kings opened, letting in Molotov and his retinue.

The meeting began with Hitler's statement that the main theme of the current negotiations, as it seems to him, is the following: in the life of peoples it is rather difficult to plan the course of events for a long time ahead. Personal factors are often responsible for emerging conflicts. He, nevertheless, believes that it is necessary to try to bring order to the development of peoples, and if possible for a long time, in order to avoid friction and prevent, as far as humanly possible, conflicts.

Russia and Germany are two great nations that, by the very nature of things, will have no reason for a conflict of interests if each nation understands that the other side needs some vital things, without which its existence is impossible. Moreover, the systems of government in both countries are not interested in war as such, but need peace more than war in order to carry out their internal program.

Hitler falls silent, waiting for Molotov's remarks. He assures that he fully agrees with the considerations of the Fuhrer.

Perhaps, Hitler continues his thought, that neither of the two peoples satisfied their desires one hundred percent. In political life, however, even 20-25 percent of the requirements implemented is already a big deal. By cooperating, both countries will always receive at least some benefits. Their enmity is beneficial only to third countries.

At the present time, Hitler continues, military operations are still going on against England at sea and in the air, the intensity of which is limited by the weather. England's response is ridiculous. The Russians can see for themselves that the allegations of the destruction of Berlin are a fabrication. As soon as the weather improves, Germany will be in a position to deliver the final blow to England,

Thus, for the moment, Germany's aim is not only to make military preparations for this final battle, but also to try to clarify the political issues that will matter during the crushing of England and after it. Therefore, he revised relations with Russia, but not in a negative way, but with the intention of organizing their positive development, if possible - for a long period of time. In doing so, he came to the following conclusions:

First, Germany does not seek military assistance from Russia.

Secondly, due to the incredible expansion of the theater of operations, Germany was forced, in order to confront England, to invade territories remote from Germany, in which she was generally not interested either politically or economically.

Thirdly, there are some things, the full importance of which was revealed only during the war, but which are vitally important for Germany. Among them are certain sources of raw materials that Germany considers the most important and absolutely indispensable.

Perhaps Herr Molotov noticed that in a number of cases there were deviations from those original boundaries of spheres of influence that were agreed upon between Stalin and the Reich Foreign Minister. Such deviations had already taken place several times in the course of Russian operations against Poland. In some cases, he - the Fuhrer - was not ready to make concessions, but he understood that it was desirable to find a compromise solution, as, for example, in the case of Lithuania. However, in the course of the war, Germany encountered problems that could not have been foreseen at the beginning of the war, but which are extremely important from the point of view of military operations. It is now important to consider the question of how, leaving aside momentary considerations, to outline the cooperation between Germany and Russia and what direction the development of German-Russian relations will take in the future. In this case, the following points are important for Germany:

1. The need for living space. During the war, Germany acquired such vast expanses that it would take her 100 years to use them completely.
2. Some colonial expansion in North Africa is needed.
3. Germany needs certain raw materials, the supply of which she must guarantee herself under any circumstances.
4. Germany cannot allow hostile states to establish air and naval bases in certain areas.

In this case, Russia's interests will not be affected in any way. The Russian Empire can develop without the slightest damage to German interests.

Molotov, constantly nodding his head at the last words of Hitler, breaking the protocol, noticed that everything the Fuhrer said was absolutely true.

Hitler continued: "If both countries come to understand this fact, they can establish mutually beneficial cooperation and save themselves from complications, friction and anxiety. It is quite obvious that Germany and Russia will never unite into a single state. Both countries will exist separately from each other as two powerful parts of the world. Both of them can build their own future if they take into account the interests of the other side. Germany has no interests in Asia other than general economic and commercial interests.

As for Europe, there are several points of contact between the interests of Germany, Russia and Italy. Each of these countries has an understandable desire to have access to the open sea. Germany wants to go to the North Sea. Italy wants to destroy the "bolt" set on Gibraltar, and Russia is striving for the ocean. The question is how great are the chances of these three powers to really get free access to the ocean without having to conflict with each other on this issue.

However, as long as the war with England lasts, no steps can be taken that are in any way contrary to the goals of ending the war with Great Britain. So, Germany did not have

no political interests in the Balkans, but at present it is forced to step up its activities there. The reason for this is purely military interests, the protection of which is not the most pleasant task, since, for example, the German military forces should be located in Romania hundreds of kilometers from supply bases. For similar reasons, Germany cannot bear the very idea that England can get bridgeheads in Greece for the construction of air and naval bases. The Reich is obliged to prevent this under any circumstances.

In any case, Germany would have preferred to end the war last year and demobilize its army in order to resume peaceful work, since from an economic point of view, any war is bad business.

Molotov noted that the Fuhrer's statements concerned general issues and that he was generally ready to accept these considerations.

"Before I left Moscow," Molotov emphasized, "Stalin gave me precise instructions, and everything I am going to say now coincides with Stalin's views. I fully agree with the Führer's opinion that both partners have benefited greatly from the German-Russian agreement. Germany received a secure rear: it is generally known that this was of great importance for the course of events during the year of the war. However, Germany received significant economic benefits in Poland. Thanks to the exchange of Lithuania for the Lublin Voivodeship, any friction between Russia and Germany was prevented. The German-Russian agreement of last year can thus be considered fulfilled in all points except one, namely Finland.

Now about the Tripartite Pact. What does the "new order" mean in Europe and Asia, and what role will be assigned to the USSR in it? These questions need to be discussed during the Berlin talks and the proposed visit to Moscow by the Reich Foreign Minister, which the Russians are definitely counting on. In addition, questions about Russian interests in the Balkans and the Black Sea, concerning Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, should be clarified. It will be easier for the Soviet Government to give answers to the questions raised by the Führer if the Fuehrer provides an explanation of all this.

The Soviet government is interested in the "new order" in Europe, in particular, its form and pace of development. It would also like to have an idea of the boundaries of the so-called "great East Asian space."

Hitler restrained himself and calmly replied that the Tripartite Pact was intended to regulate the state of affairs in Europe in accordance with the natural interests of the European countries, and in fulfillment of this, Germany is now turning to the Soviet Union so that she can express her opinion regarding the areas of interest to her. Without the assistance of Soviet Russia, no agreement can be reached in all cases. This applies not only to Europe, but also to Asia, where Russia itself will participate in the definition of the great East Asian space and declare its claims. Germany's task here is reduced to mediation. In no case will Russia be confronted with a fait accompli.

Hitler did not wait for Molotov's answer, looked at his watch and, citing the possibility of an air raid, offered to transfer the negotiations to the next day. Molotov, tired of the Fuhrer's long and incoherent monologues, agreed and reminded him that there would be a big reception at the Soviet embassy in the evening.

Hitler did not come to the reception, but both of his deputies, Hess and Goering, came to the luxurious mansion of the Soviet embassy on Unter den Linden.

Tall, thin, with a gloomy expression, with excited eyes of a fanatic, Hess looked with some fear at the banquet table in the form of a huge letter "P",

decorated with bright carnations and antique silver, preserved from tsarist times.

Unlike Hess, who even appeared at the reception in a modest party tunic and belt, Reichsmargaal Goering felt very at ease in the medieval luxury of the Soviet embassy.

Having told the head of the Soviet government in confidence that he, Goering, would be entrusted with commanding the victory parade in London, the Reich Marshal invited Molotov to attend the parade. Molotov asked what date he should book a ticket to London for.

"On July 15!" Goering answered without a shadow of doubt in his voice.

But Goering was especially kind to the new Soviet ambassador Vladimir Dekanozov, which was very helpful, since Dekanozov had a special task from the NKVD to please Goering.

The British decided to take part in the sincere fun of the banquet. Air-raid sirens howled, mirrored windows trembled from the roar of anti-aircraft guns. Göring was visibly embarrassed and left quickly.

There was no bomb shelter in the embassy building. The hosts and guests rushed to the exit ... Many employees remained at the embassy. The radio worked, transmitting to Moscow a coded message about the first conversation with Hitler. In a reply message, the leader insisted on specifically resolving issues related to Finland, Bulgaria, Romania and the Turkish straits with Hitler. In the event of a positive resolution of these issues, Molotov was instructed to agree to the entry of the USSR into the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis. Thus, a member of the Russian section

Comintern - Comrade Stalin - agreed to the accession of the first country in the world of the victorious proletariat to

anti-communist pact. What can you not do in the name of a great idea! ..

Hitler also had not the best night of his life. Reports of the defeat of the Italian fleet in Taranto, of Wywell's unexpected sortie in the desert, and the humiliating British raid on Berlin in the midst of negotiations with Molotov - all this, of course, did not contribute to a good mood and called for revenge.

He called Goering and ordered to teach the British so

"to shake the whole world."

"Turn one of their cities into ruins! Hitler yelled into the phone. -

Destroy it completely. Wipe off the face of the earth! - "What city? Goering asked, always fond of specific orders. -

"Any! Hitler barked back, pointing at random at the map of England. The Fuhrer's finger stuck in the space between Birmingham and Coventry northwest of London.

"Coventry! Hitler proclaimed. Goering did not mind and began to give the necessary orders.

The next day, November 13, negotiations between Hitler and Molotov resumed. Both were pale. The upcoming conversation promised to be heightened nervous. And so it happened.

Hitler began by returning to Molotov's remark, made during yesterday's conversation, about the fulfillment of the German-Russian agreement "with the exception of one point, namely Finland."

During the Russo-Finnish War, Germany fulfilled all its obligations to observe absolute benevolent neutrality.

"The Russian government," Molotov put in, "did not have any serious reasons to criticize the position of Germany during this conflict, provoked, by the way, by the Finns, and not by us."

Now, continued Hitler, the real situation is this: in accordance with the German-Russian agreement, Germany recognizes that politically Finland is of paramount interest to Russia and is in its zone of influence. However, Germany is forced to take into account two points: first, while the war is going on, Germany is extremely interested in obtaining nickel and timber from Finland; secondly, Germany does not want any new conflicts in the Baltic Sea, which will further restrict her freedom of movement in one of the few merchant shipping areas still open to Germany. It would be completely wrong to say that Germany occupied Finland. German troops are only being transported through Finland to Kirkenes, about which Germany officially informed Russia. Due to the length of the route, trains have to stop two or three times on Finnish territory. However, as soon as the transit of military contingents is completed, no additional troops will be sent through Finland.

He, the Fuhrer, emphasizes that both Germany and Russia should have a natural interest in preventing the Baltic Sea from becoming a war zone again.

Since the Russo-Finnish War, there have been significant changes in the prospects for military operations, since England has long-range bombers and fighter-bombers at its disposal and can seize a bridgehead on Finnish airfields. In addition to this, there is also a purely psychological factor, which is extremely burdensome. The Finns courageously defended themselves and won the sympathy of the whole world, especially Scandinavia.

In Germany itself, during the Russo-Finnish War, people were to some extent dissatisfied with the position that, as a result of the agreement with Russia, Germany should have taken and actually took. For the above reasons, Germany does not want a new Russo-Finnish war. However, this does not affect Russia's legitimate claims. Germany proves this again and again with its position on many issues, in particular, on the question of strengthening the Åland Islands. However, while the war is going on, her economic interests in Finland are as important as in Romania. Germany counts on respect for these interests also because she once demonstrated a complete understanding of Russian interests in Lithuania and Bukovina. In any case, she does not have any political interests in Finland, and she fully recognizes the fact that this country is part of the Russian zone of influence.

Without looking at the Fuhrer, Molotov recalled that the 1939 agreement had in mind a certain stage of development, which ended with the end of the Polish War, and the second stage ended with the defeat of France, and now they are in the third stage.

Molotov declared that the Soviet government considered it its duty (!) to finally settle the Finnish question. This does not require any new agreements. According to the existing German-Russian agreement, Finland is included in the sphere of influence of Russia.



In a display of uncharacteristic patience, Hitler again repeated that Germany did not want to allow war in the Baltic Sea and that she badly needed Finland as a supplier of nickel and timber. Unlike Russia, Germany has no political interest in Finland and does not occupy any part of Finnish territory.

"The Soviet position on this issue is something that is not entirely clear to me," Hitler suddenly announced.  
- In this regard, a very important question for Germany arises:

Does Russia intend to start a new war against Finland?"

Seeing that Molotov did not understand the essence of his previous answer, Hitler repeated that there should be no more war in the Baltic. In Germany itself, during the Russo-Finnish war, people were dissatisfied with the position that, by agreement with Russia, Germany had taken. While the war with England is going on, her economic interests in Finland and Rumania are very important. Germany at one time demonstrated a complete understanding of Russian interests in Lithuania and Bukovina.

Molotov's voice sounds frankly offended. What would you have done without us if we had not provided your rear and provided you with everything you need to wage war? And now you reproach us with Lithuania and try to take away our legitimate prey in the form of Finland!

Hitler was losing patience. No one dared so brazenly extort prey from him. He restrained himself and turned the conversation to a different plane, Russia must understand that within the framework of cooperation, benefits can be achieved to a much wider extent than the trifles being discussed now.

All friendly countries should stop their differences and focus solely on the division of the British Empire. This applies to Germany, France, Italy, Russia and Japan.

At this point, Hitler interrupted his speech and drew the attention of those present to a later time, saying that in view of the possible air attacks of the British, it was better to end the negotiations now, since the main issues had probably already been discussed sufficiently. In the evening he will be busy with other matters, and Reichsminister Ribbentrop will complete the negotiations.

Ribbentrop invited Molotov and Dekanozov to a round table in the corner and declared that, in accordance with the wishes of the Fuehrer, it would be expedient to sum up the negotiations.

The main thing is the question of cooperation between the countries of the Tripartite Pact - Germany, Italy and Japan - and the Soviet Union.

If the Soviet Union holds the same point of view, then he, Ribbentrop, believes that the ultimate goal should be an agreement between the powers of the Triple Alliance and the Soviet Union. He drafted this agreement.

"The governments of the states of the Tripartite Pact - Germany, Italy and Japan, on the one hand, and the government of the USSR, on the other hand, driven by the desire to establish within their natural borders an order that serves the benefit of all the peoples concerned, and to create a firm and lasting foundation for their common direction of efforts, agreed as follows:

#### Article 1

In the Tripartite Pact of September 27, 1940, Germany, Italy and Japan agreed by all possible means to oppose the turning of the war into a world conflict and

to cooperate jointly in the speedy restoration of the shooting gallery throughout the world. They express their readiness to expand their cooperation with the peoples of other parts of the world striving to achieve the same goal. The Soviet Union declares that it approves of these goals and, for its part, decides, together with the Three Powers, to work out a common political line.

## Article 2

Germany, Italy, Japan and the Soviet Union undertake to respect each other's natural spheres of influence...

## Article 3

Germany, Italy, Japan and the Soviet Union undertake not to enter into blocs of states and not to adhere to any international blocs directed against one of the Four Powers.

This treaty, Ribbentrop explained, is supposed to be concluded for 10 years, with the condition that the governments of the Four Powers reach an agreement on extending the treaty before the expiration of the treaty. The treaty itself will, of course, be public, but with reference to it, a secret agreement can be concluded that determines the territorial interests of the Four Powers.

The center of gravity of Germany's territorial interests, without taking into account the territorial changes that will take place in Europe after the conclusion of peace, is in Central Africa.

The center of gravity of Italy's territorial interests, without taking into account the territorial changes that will take place in Europe after the conclusion of peace, is in North and North-East Africa. Japan's interests must be clarified by diplomatic channels.

The center of gravity of the interests of the Soviet Union presumably lies south of the territory of the Soviet Union in the direction of the Indian Ocean.

The German government will welcome the readiness of the Soviet Union to cooperate with Italy, Japan and Germany. It has been said many times that the main question is whether the Soviet Union is ready and able to cooperate with us in the destruction of the British Empire.

Molotov realized that he could not get more from the Germans, but because it happened to him very rarely, he allowed himself to joke. Apparently, the bomb shelter influenced him in a certain way. "Since the Germans consider the war with England already won," he remarked, "and Germany is waging a life-and-death war against England, I have no choice but to assume that Germany is fighting for life, and England for "death".

They served coffee. The farewell was surprisingly simple and cordial. Everyone was about to leave, but the phone rang. Ribbentrop picked up the phone and his face fell: a new wave of British bombers was coming towards the city.

## Chapter 8

The exceptional impudence of the British, who forced the high contracting parties

spend most of the time in bomb shelters, demanded quick and cruel punishment. No matter how hard the Germans tried to explain what happened, a completely illogical and even rather fantastic picture emerged from all their explanations: the deceased made a scandal just at the moment when in Berlin the heads of the Soviet and German governments discussed the ritual of his funeral and gave preliminary orders on the division of his property.

While the fast Berlin-Moscow train sped through Europe back to Moscow, a not in the best mood Molotov, 400 German bombers, appearing in the predawn sky over the English provincial city of Coventry, rained down on him 400 tons of high-explosive and 56 tons of incendiary bombs, as well as 127 parachute bombs. mines to block the River Evan, which flows into Bristol Bay.

The Luftwaffe strike hit the historic city center and residential areas. A beautiful 14th-century cathedral was destroyed, the entire business center of the city was on fire, 600 people died, for, as Goering explained the next morning, the raid had no other purpose than retaliation for the British bomber raids on Berlin in the previous days.

The British, having concentrated almost all air defense forces in the area of London and their airfields (mainly in the south of the country), left the province virtually defenseless from air strikes. Gradually, German aviation, bearing increasing losses, ceased to storm the British air bases, replacing them with spectacular blitzes over London. But that didn't make the loss any less. Transferring the strike to the English hinterland made it possible to minimize losses and at the same time continue a high-profile propaganda campaign about the brilliant victories of German weapons.

Of late, Hitler, according to the testimony of his closest associates, began to love solitude. The officers on duty who looked into the office most often saw him sitting, propping his head with his palm with wide open, almost unblinking eyes, thinking about something.

A rumor spread among the technical staff that in this way the Fuhrer communicates with higher powers, receiving final instructions from them and being charged with cosmic energy. The party leaders were the first to hear this rumor from the staff and pretended that they had known about it for a long time. It has been known for a long time, but this behavior of Hitler began only in November 1940.

Of course, being a romantic, Hitler patronized all sorts of mystical theories, whether it was Gorbiger's theories of cosmic ice and the high moon, or Gaushofer's hypotheses, colored with quotations from Buddhist and Tibetan teachings, from which the Fuhrer most often repeated:

"In the Interval between creation and dissolution, Vishnu-Geshya rested in his own essence, shining with dormant power among the seeds of future lives." Sometimes he was carried away and he could say almost like a Leninist that

"there is Nordic and National Socialist science which is opposed to Jewish-liberal science." Sometimes he was even more carried away when he, with a gleam in his eyes, proved that "the so-called earthly surface on which we all live is in fact not convex, but concave. And we live inside like flies in a flask." It is not known whether Hitler was joking and was misunderstood by those who heard him, or really read various Gorbigerian fiction, but it was this Fuhrer's passion that led to the fact that today, November 16, 1940, his mood was completely spoiled.

Once he discussed this theory in the presence of Himmler and Hess, who, like him,

Dr. Gaushofer taught to think in the most incredible paradoxes. Unexpectedly, the question arose, and not whether to check it all in practice? Hitler agreed that if there was a way to prove this theory, it would crush all previous human worldview, showing the whole world that it is National Socialism that opens the way for humanity to an as yet unexplored future.

Hitler did not go into details, but it turned out that his friends did not throw words into the wind. In one of the secret laboratories of the Reich, the first radar stations were created for the country's air defense system. Hess and Himmler considered that it was with their help that it would be easiest to prove the Führer's theory. If the Earth is not convex, but concave, then the closest to the walls of the "bulb" are those places that are considered to be arctic. It is enough to deliver the radars to a high polar latitude, and they will immediately "probe" the walls of the "incubator" with their beams.

The polar island of Jan Mayen was chosen as the site of the experiment, where, under the escort of two destroyers, a secret expedition led by Dr. Rudolf Franz was landed. Dr. Franz was the only person privy to the true purpose of the expedition. Everyone else was told that with the help of equipment brought to the island, British ships in Scapa Flow would be monitored.

It was in this version that the British intelligence believed, since the scientists had not had time to deploy the radars, when the English battlecruiser Rinaun appeared near the island, forcing the German destroyers to quickly retreat with its silhouette. Under the cover of Rinaun, the British landed on the island and captured the entire expedition, along with top-secret equipment.

Moreover, neither Himmler nor Hess even bothered to report this to Hitler. He learned everything from his naval adjutant Puttkamer! (But the Germans did not rest on this. A new expedition to test the "concavity" of the earth was organized in April 1942 - this time on the island of Rügen. The expedition was led by Dr. Heinz Fischer, the most famous specialist in the study of infrared rays in Germany. The expedition included several the best specialists in radar, who brought to the island samples of experimental radars of greater power than those that were in 1940. The installed radars and using infrared rays failed to detect the walls of the "flask." It is not known whether Hitler was reported?).

But remaining alone, Hitler thought not only about the "earth-flask", Vishnu or the sayings of the Buddha. He also thought about how to isolate - since there is no way to crush yet - a potential ally of England - the United States of America. And what would have happened to present-day England if the United States had not existed? Could she single-handedly confront Germany and so proudly and brazenly reject all sincere peace proposals?

Hitler really hoped that in the elections of 1940 the United States would finally elect a new president with whom they would at least somehow be able to agree and he would not pursue such an openly anti-German policy as Franklin Roosevelt. Moreover, he had already served two full terms in the presidency, but nevertheless put forward his candidacy for a third term - an unprecedented event in the history of America!

On Hitler's orders, Germany secretly spent more than \$10 million in support of Roosevelt's main rival, Republican candidate Wendell Willkie. Wilkie's entire election campaign was based on the accusation of Roosevelt that, almost without disguise, he was dragging the United States into the war on the side of England. He exposed Roosevelt as a warmonger, frightened Americans with warnings that the votes given to Roosevelt would turn into wooden crosses for their sons, husbands and

brothers. Breaking his voice at rallies, Willkie shouted that "if Roosevelt wins, we will be involved in a foreign war no later than five months."

It had an effect on people, but the strangest thing was that Roosevelt did not try to refute his rival. On the contrary, he made the core of his election program an appeal to the Americans not to change an experienced president and his "played" team for a newcomer in such a formidable and uncertain time, when the war blazing in Europe at any moment can scorch the United States with its fire. The Gallup Institute predicted his defeat, and Hitler sincerely hoped that this would happen.

But that didn't happen. Roosevelt won, and his statements immediately after the November 6 presidential election left no doubt about the course of his future policy: at the first convenient moment, stand next to England in the fight against Hitler. Not against Germany, namely against Hitler. German intelligence, which feels very at ease in the United States (the FBI monitors them, but does not detain anyone because of the softness of peacetime laws in the United States. On the very first day of the war, the entire German intelligence network in the United States will be liquidated), reports interesting details. Until now, for the entire flow of cargo that has poured from the United States to England since the beginning of the war, the British paid in cash, and now, in terms of dollar resources, Great Britain was on the verge of bankruptcy. It was obvious that England could not continue the fight without receiving supplies from the United States. But under American "pay cash and carry" law, she couldn't get any supplies without dollars. And so Roosevelt, almost the day after his third election to the presidency, according to intelligence, said: "We will provide the British with everything necessary for waging war on rent or on loan."

Roosevelt used the English word "lend-lease", and at that time Hitler did not get the whole sinister meaning of this completely peaceful word.

But he well understood that his hopes for the rapid exhaustion of England were unrealizable, and it was foolish to wait until the United States was exhausted.

The scheme for Hitler was clear: Roosevelt stood behind Churchill, which he did not think about in September 1939, and the Jews stood behind Roosevelt. And this means that at any moment he will have the United States as an adversary in the war, knowing full well that he will never win such a war, where England and the USA act in an alliance. Although it can somehow be drawn if the country does not panic, as in 1918.

Every morning Hitler expected some new surprises from Roosevelt. In the ports of Germany and the countries occupied by it, there were many merchant ships flying the Stars and Stripes flag. Hitler was waiting for a message that some American merchant ship had blown up in one of the German ports along with the entire crew.

Was he afraid of it? Oh no!

It was infuriating that he clearly saw the threat, but could not do anything to prevent it. On September 28 of this year, Roosevelt pushed the conscription law through Congress and received \$4,800,000,000 for a "defensive measures program" that included building so many ships and planes that it was breathtaking. Recently (November 8), speaking in Munich, Hitler was forced to admit:

"As for the size of production in America, they cannot even be expressed in astronomical figures. Therefore, in this area, I do not intend to compete with America. And if he does not intend to compete with America in the field of arms production, then in what way can he compete at all?

Its designers were not able to create a serial model of a strategic bomber, and America has already built thousands of such machines. They are already secretly concentrating in England, and the concept of strategic bombing of Germany is being developed at the headquarters and all calculations are being made to destroy the entire German industry within one and a half to two years.

Hitler understood that these were not mere threats. England has lost many battles in its history, but has never lost a war. Especially now, when behind her back the powerful silhouette of the United States is becoming more and more clear, not vulnerable to any means of attack that Hitler possesses. It cannot be said that the Fuhrer made no effort to prevent the US threat to Germany. Immediately after coming to power, bewildered (like many others) by the possibilities offered by American democracy, Hitler became obsessed with the idea of "Germanizing" the United States. The idea was based on the fact that in any encyclopedia it was possible to obtain data on the residence of 30 million people of German origin in the United States. Almost half of what lives in Germany itself - 30 million! It is enough to overthrow the government of the United States, and appoint a Gauleiter to rule the country - either sent from Berlin or from Americans of German origin.

By the end of 1940, when the law on conscription was adopted in the United States and on September 5 the American government handed over to the British 50 (fifty) destroyers allegedly in exchange for some kind of British bases in the Western Hemisphere, Berlin realized that the United States should be applied simpler and cheaper methods of exposure.

On September 12, a massive explosion rocked the state of New Jersey. The gunpowder factory of the Hercules company in Kenilworth exploded. 52 people died, 50 were seriously injured. The loss was estimated at several million dollars.

It was like a start. Then there was a pause - in Berlin they were waiting for the results of the elections.

When, on November 5, Roosevelt was re-elected president for the third time and everyone in Berlin realized that their truly titanic efforts and huge money had gone to dust, they decided to congratulate the US president with a powerful salute from several sabotage organizations at once.

On November 12, 1940, with a difference of 20 minutes, deafening explosions thundered at three military factories in the states of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. In Woodbridge, New Jersey, explosions destroyed two factory buildings of a company that produces torpedoes and communications equipment for the needs of the US Navy. In Edinburg (Pennsylvania), the gunpowder factory of the American Cyanamid and Chemical Corporation exploded, and in Allentown (also in Pennsylvania), the gunpowder factory of the Trojan Powder company was destroyed by an explosion. 16 people died, many were injured. Explosions occurred at 8:00, 8:10 and 8:20 in the morning. Commenting on these events, Secretary of War Henry Stimson noted that all this

"suggests Teutonic methodicalness."

The sabotage campaign, which replaced the propaganda one, no longer set itself the goal of radically changing the course of the foreign policy of the United States. By the very beginning of such actions, the Germans, as it were, acknowledged their defeat, setting smaller tasks for their agents - to inflict the maximum possible damage on a potential enemy even before the official start of hostilities, bringing them closer with each new sabotage and making them completely inevitable.

The pact concluded on September 27 between Germany, Italy and Japan, binding them to joint action if any of these powers was attacked by a state not yet participating in the war, was clearly directed against the United States, but served as little consolation. due to complete incompetence

Italians and the Asian insecurities of the Japanese.

There are interesting, almost mystical parallels in the fate of Hitler and Roosevelt. The same day in January was celebrated by both: for Hitler it was the day of his appointment as Chancellor of Germany, for Roosevelt it was his birthday. Only one day separated them in March 1933, when both gained the right to power: the day of Roosevelt's inauguration coincided with the vote in the Reichstag, which gave Hitler dictatorial powers.

For 12 years, Roosevelt and Hitler led the world's two greatest powers, spending the first six years leading their countries out of their deepest depression. For the next six years, they led their countries' war efforts in deadly combat with each other. And both died in April 1945, 18 days apart, at the very end of a war that Roosevelt won and Hitler lost. Apparently, the law of world balance is all-encompassing, and in the event of crises that threaten the very existence of a fragile human civilization, leaders appear almost simultaneously in confronting superpowers, charged with almost the same amount of dynamic energy aimed at achieving world hegemony. Indeed, Hitler dreamed of the "Germanization" of the world, which included the physical destruction of some peoples, the transformation of other peoples into second-class people with hegemony over the world of the German race. Stalin dreamed of the "Sovietization" of the world, which required the physical destruction of some classes of society and the transformation of the surviving classes into an obedient crowd of slaves of a classless society with hegemony over the world of the party nomenclature. Everyone knows this, and there is nothing new in it. But few people pay attention to the fact that Roosevelt acted in the name of "Americanization" of the world, regardless of what he said. We won't go into details. Hitler and Stalin also spoke many convincing and beautiful phrases. But facts are stubborn things. Hitler's dream collapsed under the power of the Allies. Stalin's dream, rotten to the ground, collapsed. And the process of "Americanization" of the world continues at a colossal pace. I deliberately do not place any signs of positivity or negativity here. Rather, I'm talking about different methods in achieving the same goal - world domination.

The only way to really counter the might of the United States is to tie Moscow to the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis. Then, against the Anglo-American bloc, it would be possible to create such a powerful Eurasian coalition with practically unlimited economic and human resources that it would be possible not only not to be afraid of American blackmail, but also to speak with the States themselves (not to mention England) in the language best understood by everyone

the language of power.

At some point, Hitler himself sincerely believed that Stalin could be persuaded to join the three-power pact "to take part in the division of the world, in which the USSR was destined mainly for the southeast direction - the Persian Gulf, the Middle East, India. This was recommended to Hitler by his closest advisers, who convinced that these regions had been the most coveted for at least two hundred years for all Russian rulers, from Catherine II to Stalin.

Dividing the world after the collapse of the British Empire in a serious way was possible only with Stalin. It just so happened that there was simply no one else to be with.

For the sake of this, it was possible to abandon his, Hitler's, very vaguely formulated "anti-Bolshevik mission" and use Stalin for the quick and effective collapse of the British Empire.

In other words, to use Stalin for actually the same purpose for which Stalin expected to use Hitler - to destroy the British Empire and the entire world capitalist system. What does Stalin want?

1. He wants to occupy all of Finland.
2. He wants to send troops to Bulgaria.
3. He wants to control the Turkish straits. Not to own them, but only to control them.

In the end, all this could be agreed, albeit in stages, but only to get the USSR into the Axis.

If Stalin, as follows from many intelligence reports, is playing his own diabolical game, waiting for an opportune moment to attack Germany, then at least another six months should be won in order to deploy enough forces on the eastern borders and turn these borders into a solid front line.

But then the situation becomes not just critical, but catastrophic. Germany falls into a gigantic grip between the US and Britain in the west, and the Stalinist hordes in the east, while losing virtually the only source of strategic raw materials and materials. The source, thanks to which it was possible to victoriously win back the first year of the war and accumulate resources for another year and a half.

If Stalin turns from a friendly neutral not into an ally, but into an enemy, then the situation will become simply hopeless. This will predetermine the collapse of all the Fuhrer's plans and destroy Germany as a state.

"To all diplomatic missions and services.

Berlin 15 November 1940

The conversations between the German and Soviet governments on the occasion of Molotov's stay in Berlin were conducted on the basis of the treaties concluded last year, and ended with the final agreement of both countries to firmly and resolutely continue in the future the policy initiated by these treaties. In addition, the conversations served the purposes of coordinating the policy of the Soviet Union and the countries of the Tripartite Pact.

In the same spirit, the Soviet "Communique on the negotiations of V.M. Molotov with the leaders of the German government", published in Pravda on November 15, 1940, was sustained:

"During his stay in Berlin during November 12-13 of this year, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Comrade V.M. Molotov, had a conversation with the Reich Chancellor, Mr. A. Hitler and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. von Ribbentrop. The exchange of views proceeded in an atmosphere of mutual trust and established mutual understanding on all the most important issues of interest to the USSR and Germany ... "

Molotov returned to Moscow with Dekanozov, who presented Stalin with an analytical report from the Soviet embassy in Berlin, prognosticating German policy for the foreseeable future. The report, in particular, stated: "The involvement of the USSR on the side of Germany is the basis of Germany's foreign policy plan, aimed at the quickest victorious end to the war with England."

Stalin asked Molotov and Dekanozov what their own opinion was regarding such a withdrawal of our Berlin residency. Since this document came through the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, such a question could not have been asked: both were in agreement.

In general, it will be possible to reach an agreement with both Japan and the United States. But the best thing, of course, is to pit these countries against each other in the struggle for hegemony in the southeastern



Asia and the Pacific. The Japanese, of course, will never defeat America alone, no matter how puffed up they are. But the pampered Americans will never defeat such harsh and ascetic warriors as the Japanese are. And then we'll see which of you to help be the first to become a "Soviet republic." Lenin prophesied back in 1917: "You know that the war between America and Japan is already ready, it has been prepared for decades, it is not accidental; Tactics don't depend on who fires first." And the plan is already almost ready, how to put into practice the next ingenious foresight of the great leader.

It will be better this way.

Then they will not be up to discussing Stalin's actions.

In principle, Stalin decides, there is nothing terrible if we agree to join the three-power pact. On the terms, of course, which Comrade Molotov had already laid out to Hitler and Ribbentrop. But regardless of the German proposals, we must start putting pressure on Bulgaria and Turkey. The entry of troops into Bulgaria and the control of the straits must become the immediate task of our diplomacy. While diplomacy...

"Top secret. Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. November 5, 1940

On staffing schools and pilot schools

Air Force of the Red Army.

To ensure the staffing of schools and schools for pilots of the Red Army Air Force, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR decides:

1. Oblige the Central Council of Osoaviakhim to prepare 20,000 additional pilots for NGOs in the Osoaviakhim system.
2. Oblige the Head of the Main Directorate of the Civil Air Fleet to prepare 10,000 pilots for NGOs in the Civil Air Fleet system ... "

During the First World War, England was forced to curtail its military shipbuilding program for one simple reason: there was no one to complete the new ships for which funds were allocated. There was a lack of trained personnel. And now the Soviet Union faced a similar problem. The gigantic program, which was under the personal control of Comrade Stalin, and therefore strictly carried out, was ready to provide the country's Air Force with 150,000 combat vehicles by the summer of 1941, but there was a catastrophic shortage of pilots.

Not only pilots were missing. The scale of the deployment of the armed forces in the country has led to the fact that wherever you look, there is a shortage of people everywhere. In the same way, there are not enough submariners, tank crews - especially drivers, signalmen, military doctors - in almost the entire range of military specialties.

This disgrace occurred due to the local failure to comply with the Decree of the Central Committee of November 1939, where all regional committees, city committees and district committees (rural) of the All-Russian Committee of the Bolsheviks) were ordered to launch an agitation campaign to replace men with women in professions traditionally considered male. None of this even made much of a secret.

A newsreel flowed through the cinemas of the country: a team of female tunnellers in the mines of Kuzbass and Donbass with picks and jackhammers, young, perky, beautiful, coquettish, although somewhat unnaturally smeared with coal dust.

Much easier in the countryside. Women in the field, women on farms, women on tractors. Some women. According to the latest information, for incomplete 11 months of 1940 from

collective farms and state farms, without much noise and publicity, managed to seize 760 thousand men up to the age of 30 years. Everything seems to be in order here. And in the cities, everything turned out to be sheer window dressing. All these women's steamship, locomotive, mining and lumberjack brigades are pure experiment. Brigades either exist in one copy or do not exist at all. Stalin slips feature films for documentaries.

There was even a denunciation that the slaughter girl and the ballerina girl were four different girls filmed in completely different places. He brought this to the attention of his comrades. The comrades lowered their eyes, but said firmly: in industry, only unskilled labor can be replaced by women.

Skilled workers, Comrade Stalin, need to be trained longer than fighter pilots. "You can shoot me," Shakhurin, People's Commissar for Aviation Industry, told him bluntly, "but I won't give you a single highly qualified worker even in wartime."

There was also the Gulag as a reserve labor force. Stalin ordered to provide him with a certificate of the presence of prisoners. Beria dragged on with this case for a long time, referring to the fact that Yezhov planted so much - not to figure it out. I had to ask Lavrenty if he would like to take a walk in the Gulag himself and count the prisoners there for ten years. Your man understands jokes. The next day he brought a certificate: "GULAG: availability on 01.11.40. - 3.729.258 people, special camps of the NKVD: availability as of 01.11.40. - 4.475.504 people Total: 8.2 million people. Approximately 2.8 million people are awaiting sentencing, according to your instructions for the order for 1941.

11 million people are sitting in prisons and camps, not participating together with the whole people in the great creative process.

He, Stalin, always considered this abnormal. And despite some resistance from his comrades, he allowed the release of many military men, especially sailors.

The secret operational report, which, together with the summary figures, provided to him by Beria, showed, however, that of those in the Gulag, only peasants work, who ended up in the camps mainly according to the "seven-eight" law of August 7, 1934 for the theft of socialist property, and hard workers from factories planted for the same plus economic sabotage. They make up the majority of the population of the Gulag, they work hard, many die in a month, but on the whole they fulfill the norm. Article 58 - various chatty intellectuals - works, but it is of little use.

A good third of those in the zones are criminals.

These do not work at all - the criminal "law" forbids working. Why keep such people in camps if they don't work anyway? Stalin spoke with Beria, Merkulov and other knowledgeable comrades and decided to conduct a bold social experiment: to offer the criminals to atone for their guilt before the Motherland by serving in the army. Form additional military contingents from them and throw them into battle under the command of camp commanders, who are still enough behind barbed wire. By the way, many criminals have already served in the army, so there will be no big problems with their training. And they will be able to show their criminal habits when communicating with the local population of those countries that will be on the way.

"proletarian battalions".

Some comrades doubted the expediency of such an event. When confronted with open danger, criminals tend to fall into hysterics and panic.

And panic is contagious. Nothing, in this case special units of the NKVD will be created, which have already shown themselves well during the winter war with the Finns.

The military, it seems, were not completely convinced, but, of course, they did not dare to object. Moreover, General Meretskov proposed to retrain part of the combined arms personnel to become tankers, pilots, and submariners by replenishing the army with criminals.

The idea seemed promising. But for now, these were all projects. Of course, he remembered the criminals not from a good life. I would gladly do without them, but even Marshal Shaposhnikov explained to him that there is a critical number of those called up for arms - no more than one and a half percent of the able-bodied male population. Otherwise, the industry and the entire economy in general will begin to fall apart. Therefore, it is necessary to create labor reserves no less important than army reserves. Preferably from persons of pre-conscription age, i.e. from teenagers.

In October 1940, a decree "On State Labor Reserves" was published, and Comrade Stalin was presented with a draft regulation on the creation of the Main Directorate of Labor Reserves. The Administration must report directly to Comrade Molotov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars.

1551 educational institutions are transferred to the jurisdiction of the Department. In these establishments, called trade and factory schools, there is a compulsory recruitment of male and female adolescents at the age of 14 years. The project proposed to make such training paid.

Stalin was never an idealist and a romantic. He was well aware that the military prison system he had conceived of training "labor reserves" on a forced basis was unlikely to arouse much enthusiasm both among the teenagers themselves and their parents. Therefore, with his own hand, he wrote in the same red pencil:

"To provide for criminal

responsibility for evasion and escape", clearly making it clear that he considers the entire system of "labor reserves" as a dressing room for the GULAG and the Red Army. And marked - 10 years. Everyone will understand this.

"Top secret". "Decree of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks On the song of Comrades Frenkel and Pokrass "Receive us, Suomi-beauty".

... Temporarily, until further notice, stop performing on the radio, from the stages and in the ranks of the song vols. Frenkel

and Pokrass "Take us, Suomi-beauty ..."

Stalin crossed out in the resolution the words

"withdraw from songbooks", wrote a resolution:

"Before August 1941"

"Top secret.

Decree of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b)

About the temporary withdrawal of the verse of the song

from the movie "If there is war tomorrow" .... Temporarily, until further notice, stop performing on the radio, from the movie screen, from the stages and in the ranks of the next verse of Comrade Frenkel's song from the movie "If tomorrow there is war":

"Who threatens our Motherland with war,

He will fight with the whole country.

Only the fascist will touch the native land,

Any tractor driver will become a tanker."

"Top secret

Decree of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b)

On the temporary removal of the word "samurai" from the song "Three Tankmen" in the film "Tractor Drivers".

... Temporarily, until further notice, replace the words "samurai" in the song "Three Tankers" in the movie "Tractor Drivers" with the words "enemy flock" and only in this form perform the song in full dress, from the movie screen, from the stages and in the ranks, as well as conduct appropriate corrections in songbooks.

The arrival of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Matsuoka, was expected, on which great hopes were pinned.

"Top secret.

Decree of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b)

On the temporary cessation of the performance of Comrade Kogan's song "We will still reach the Ganges" .... Temporarily, until further notice, stop performing on the radio, from the stages and in the ranks, and also exclude Comrade Kogan's song from the songbooks:

"And we will still reach the Ganges, and we will still die in battles,

So that my Motherland shines from Japan to England!"

Internal affairs, forcing him to constantly keep abreast of a huge country, not missing a single book without his knowledge (some brave writers send him manuscripts, wanting to have Stalin and only him as their editor), not a single film or theater premiere, not a single song and any music, take up a lot of time.

But this is only a part (and an insignificant part) of the activity of the leader of all peoples. He knows by name the collegiums of all the people's commissariats, and when it is necessary to "eliminate" not only the people's commissar himself, but also any head of the head office, department, department, and even sector, Comrade Stalin personally gives instructions on who one or another can (and should) be replaced.

He knows by sight and by name all the designers of new weapons, knows what they do and what each of them promised to create, in what quantity and in what time frame.

He knows by sight the entire leadership of the NKVD and NPOs, and in the general staff - everyone down to the operators.

He, perhaps, alone in the country (and throughout the world, of course) knows not only pseudonyms, but also the real names (with true biographies) of all Soviet foreign agents,

acting through the NKVD, GRU and NKID.

There are things that no one knows about yet, except for Comrade Stalin, because he thinks globally and for many years to come.

Recently, Beria and Merkulov received an order to deploy a whole network of new concentration camps, and everyone in the Lubyanka shrank inwardly from the anticipation of a new wave of mass terror. Shrank because not a single wave passed them. But this time, Stalin was thinking about a problem that in 1940 no one had not only thought about, but had not even imagined that such questions could be posed even in the form of a problematic. And the question was very difficult: what to do with the population of Germany, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, France, Italy, Spain, various Romania, Hungary and what else is there in Europe? Approximately a third were supposed to be liquidated, a third - to be re-educated on the spot, and a third - to be re-educated in the USSR. Re-educate by labor in Siberia, the Arctic and Northern Kazakhstan. The task was so global that only Poskrebyshev knew about it so far. The rest will find out in due course.

(In the period from September 1940 until about 1945, an unprecedented construction of new concentration camps began in the USSR, although the former Gulag system coped without expansion with the annual reception of about a million new prisoners under the Stalinist order. This is understandable, given the high death rate in the camps.

For whom were the new "zones" built? Here is an interesting order of Stalin (No. 7161 of December 16, 1944): "In the period from December 25, 1944 to January 10, 1945, to mobilize and intern for work in the USSR all able-bodied German men aged 17 to 45 years and women from 18 to 30 years old..." And rightly so, everyone will say, remembering what the Germans did on our land.

But the order has a continuation: "Citizens of Germany and Hungary, as well as citizens of Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, are subject to mobilization, regardless of their positions and duties performed ... You are allowed to take clothes and a 15-day supply of food with you ... "

Where were they going to deliver them all in two weeks? The order was canceled because the destroyed transport infrastructure of the USSR and Eastern Europe simply did not allow it to be carried out).

There were questions that for the time being were not even trusted by the "Special Folder" of the Politburo. The "special folder" is the highest level of secrecy in the Soviet Union, and it was to this folder that Stalin moved, having done away with petty matters.

"special folder"

November 10, 1940

Secret resolution of the Politburo

On the transfer, in order to help the German side, of the cliché and technology for the manufacture of banknotes of British pounds sterling ... "

From the very beginning of the war, the Germans were seized with the idea of arranging the production of counterfeit pounds. But even German pedantry and accuracy did not help. There was no experience. The Germans were engaged in this difficult task of the SD (the VIth Directorate of the RSHA of Walter Schellenberg), which, through the "NKVD-SS Friendship Society" created in January 1940, turned to the USSR for "technical assistance".

Stalin imposed a resolution: "Comrade Malenkov. Take control." Today, there was nothing else in the Special Folder, and Stalin turned to studying the intelligence report. The reports were presented to Stalin in three folders - from the NKVD, from the GRU and in a green folder, where a modest inscription was imprinted: "Secretariat of the Central Committee." The last folder contained information from sources who personally reported information to the leader.

From distant Tokyo, Richard Sorge reported in a cipher dated November 18 that Hitler had conceived and was implementing a plan to attack the Soviet Union. There were no details in the message.

Richard Sorge was exposed back in 1938 as a double agent working for the NKVD and in the service of Walter Schellenberg. In general, the life of an illegal immigrant does not lend itself to a clear analysis. It is very difficult to understand whether his work for the Germans is a cover for work for the USSR, or vice versa.

However, Soviet intelligence officers managed to obtain copies of materials sent by Sorge to the Germans regarding the situation in the Far East and the USSR's plans for Japan. In the materials, every word was true. Sorge was a communist and a member of the NSDAP at the same time. The party card of the VPK(b) was kept at the Lubyanka, and he wore a gold party badge with a swastika on the lapel of his jacket. With doubles, you always need to keep an eye out, because they themselves sometimes may not realize that they are doubles. Even Dzerzhinsky warned that a scout who had been abroad for a long time becomes a victim of the so-called "ideological intoxication" and, without realizing it, begins to work for the enemy with even greater zeal than for his own. Therefore, iron Felix believed, scouts, even the most valuable, must be recalled home from time to time and

immerse in the real values of socialism. Since the expression "real values of socialism" was an element of "new language", Stalin, constantly checking his path with the "classics", translated this expression as

"plant and liquidate," he began with Dzerzhinsky himself.

In 1937-38, as you know, dozens of scouts were recalled to Moscow, and the one who got off with 20 years of camps was happy. Most of them were shot. The smartest went over to the enemy. As for Richard Sorge, since it has been proven that he is a "double", i.e. is used by the Germans as a channel for transmitting disinformation, they decided not to touch it for now. After all, it is always interesting to find out what the enemy is trying to convince you of.

But before they had time to make such a decision, the comrades who had penetrated into the holy of holies of British intelligence reported that

Sorge, it turns out, also works for the British. Still on the British or primarily on the British? This question was too complicated, and it was already too difficult to distinguish in Sorge's reports where there was German disinformation, and where - English. Therefore, so that he would not fool anyone in Moscow, a new decision was made:

recall him to Moscow and shoot him. But Sorge did not return to Moscow, but continued to supply the NKVD with enviable constancy with information, although he had long been listed in this office as "dismissed".

On the same day, November 19, without sending any reply to the Germans yet, Stalin ordered to send the Bulgarians something like an ultimatum, drawn up in the mildest possible tones, where it was proposed, as usual, to conclude an agreement "on friendship and mutual assistance" on the model of the infamous treaties with the Baltic countries.

The Soviet Union asked to place a part of the Red Army on Bulgarian territory,

deploy a naval base of the Black Sea Fleet in Varna, and all this in exchange for financial, economic and, of course, military assistance "in the event of an attack on Bulgaria by a third power or a group of powers."

As always, going to the next victim, Moscow swore to Sophia that the proposed treaty "neither in

in any case will not affect the existing regime (monarchist!),

independence and sovereignty of Bulgaria". Settlements between Russia and Bulgaria have always been difficult. Ever since the time when Russia laid down a hundred thousand of its soldiers to create the Bulgarian state. Diplomatic relations were constantly torn, and in the First World War, it was Bulgaria that made a laughingstock of all the ideas of Russian-Serbian pan-Slavism, entering the war against Russia on the side of Germany. Relations deteriorated even more after the Bolshevik coup, when Bulgaria became almost the main country that gave shelter to the White Army retreating from Russia, becoming the object of the most vicious attacks from the Soviet regime.

Alas, it was not the autumn of 1939 and not even the summer of 1940. The year 1941 was already approaching, and Stalin's methods were well known in Europe, especially in Eastern Europe, to work just as well as a year ago. The four months taken by the Finns turned out to be

irreplaceable.

On November 21, Stalin held a meeting with the military, summoning Timoshenko, Meretskov and Golikov. The day before, the leader requested from the "Special Folder" the "Thunderstorm" plan, sent to him for approval in September 1940, when any minute the expected German landing in England caused some commotion in the Soviet headquarters. Some proposed to strike only at the Balkans, and on the line of confrontation with the Germans - to wait for Hitler's reaction. Others believed that if we start on October 1, then globally: with a simultaneous strike in both the southern and central directions. All these shirks led to the fact that the "Thunderstorm" plan, as it were, was divided into two plans. One envisaged actions only in the Balkans, and the second - against the Germans in Poland and East Prussia. The general plan, which provided for actions in two strategic directions, was somehow slurred. In fact, the old sad story was repeated, dating back as far as 1914, when the general plan of tsarist Russia, as a result of many years of planning, also fell apart. One - provided for actions only against Austria-Hungary, the other - only against Germany, which led to a breakdown in the general mobilization plan and the strategic deployment plan and made itself felt constantly until the complete collapse of Russia in the last world war. Stalin once again carefully read the document:

"September 18, 1940

N 103202/06

TOP SECRET.

VERY IMPORTANT.

"People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR

PERSONAL ONLY. Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks to comrade STALIN T. MOLOTOV

I am reporting for your consideration the action plan of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in the West and in the East for 1940 and 1941..."

The glance quickly runs along the lines of a familiar document:

"...On our western borders, Germany will be the most likely enemy..."

The document was drawn up in September, when the ideology was still alive that the Soviet Union would never start a war before someone dared to encroach on its sacred borders. Stalin became more and more convinced that such an ideology was not only harmful and dangerous, but completely inappropriate for the current moment. He has already given instructions to Mekhlis and Rogov at GLAVPUR, as well as to other bodies, to change ideological work among the masses in general, and primarily in the army. To prepare the people and the country for war, and for war

"offensive, aggressive and devastating."

"The main forces of the Red Army in the West, depending on the situation, can be deployed either south of Brest-Litovsk, in order to cut off Germany from the Balkans with a powerful blow in the directions of Lublin and Krakow, and further to Breslau (Bratislav) countries, deprive it of its most important economic bases, and decisively influence the Balkan countries in matters of their participation in the war; or north of Brest-Litovsk with the task of defeating the main forces of the German army within East Prussia and capturing the latter.

The final decision to deploy will depend on the political situation that will develop by the start of the war; in peacetime conditions, I consider it necessary to have both options developed.

The first option is to deploy south of Brest-Litovsk .... In cooperation with the left-flank army of the Western Front, inflict a decisive defeat on the Lublin-Sandomierz enemy grouping and reach the Vistula River. In the future, strike in the general direction on Kielce, Krakow and reach the Pilica River and the upper reaches of the Oder River ...

When deploying the Armed Forces of the USSR according to this basic variant, the following grouping is proposed.

Deploy three fronts directly in the West—North-Western, Western and South-Western.

North-Western Front - the main tasks.

Firmly cover the Minsk and Riga-Pskov direction and in no case prevent the Germans from invading our territory.

In cooperation with the 3rd Army of the Western Front, capture the area of Seina, Suwalki and go to the Shitkemen, Filipovo, Rachki front.

With a blow in the general direction to Insterburg, Alenstein, together with the Western Front, to tie down the German forces in East Prussia ...

The Western Front is the main task .... Simultaneously strike in the general direction on Alenshtein to tie down German forces in East Prussia.

With the transition of the armies of the South-Western Front to the offensive with a strike of the left-flank army in the general direction of Ivangorod, to help the South-Western Front to break the Lublin grouping of the enemy and, further developing the operation on Radom, to ensure the operations of the South-Western Front from the North ...

Southwestern Front - the main tasks.



Firmly covering the borders of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, in cooperation with the 4th Army of the Western Front, inflict a decisive defeat on the Lublin-Sandomierz enemy grouping and reach the Vistula River.

In the future, strike in the direction of Kalce, Petrokov and Krakow, capture the Kielce, Petrokov region and reach the Pilica River and the upper reaches of the Oder River.

As part of the front, have 6 armies - 5, 19.6, 12, 18 and 9th ...

PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONER OF DEFENSE OF THE USSR Marshal of the Soviet Union (S. TIMOSHENKO)

CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF General of the Army (K. MERETSKOV)

WRITTEN IN ONE COPY

The executor is the deputy head of the operational department, Major General Vasilevsky.

After some confusion caused by such a rapid collapse of France and the evacuation of British troops from the continent, it became necessary to further increase the power of the armed forces in order to maintain on the western borders such a balance of forces that would make it possible for our decisive victory in the event of an offensive, and on the other hand guaranteed that the enemy will never attack us unless he has gone mad, which rarely happens in big politics. The minimum such ratio of forces was to be an average of 3 to 1, and for some types of weapons 5 or more to one.

This led to the need for a sharp increase in intensity in "carrying out the necessary defense measures." Translated from modern speech into human language, this meant that if on January 1, 1940 the size of the Red Army was 2,013,400 people, then by the end of that year, i.e. today, it stood at 4,209,000, doubling in a year, making it possible to revise the figures presented in the 18 September strategic deployment plan.

Timoshenko brought Stalin his order No. 0328, dated just today: November 21, 1940 "On the training of commanding officers of the reserve in 1941 in military units", which, along with other measures of this kind, made it possible to bring the size of the army to 5,500,000 people. From the moment the day of the beginning of the "Operation Thunderstorm" began, official mobilization of several ages was announced, bringing the size of the army to 8 million people by September 1941. The new order of the People's Commissar of Defense provided for military certification of literally everyone: from nurses and paramedics to writers and poets. A separate part of the order, which required Stalin's personal approval, provided for the universal certification of all released party workers without exception.

The Chief of the General Staff drew Stalin's attention to the fact that practically no demobilization of persons who had served their terms was carried out in the armed forces. This fact, of course, is positive, but it cannot be hidden. True, the motivation is to increase the service life, but those who have served all the terms are not allowed to go home.

The head of the GRU, Golikov, informed Stalin that the Germans had not only not weakened, but were constantly intensifying their air attack on England. Moreover, by all indicators it is clear that the resistance of the British is weakening.

Golikov further admitted that there had been some increase in German divisions in East Prussia and Poland. If there were 37, now there are 45. The transfer of German troops to Finland and, in smaller numbers, to Romania continues. But, the head of the GRU emphasized, according to

According to reports, the Greeks are preparing a major offensive against the Italians in Albania, threatening to destroy 37 Italian divisions. We must expect the passage of a large grouping of German troops through the territory of Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.

The very next day, November 22, a message came that the Greeks had broken through the Italian front.

## Chapter 9

Hitler learned about the beginning of the Greek offensive, leaving his cinema, where he watched the film "Uncle Kruger" that had just been shot. The essence of the film was that it was impossible to negotiate with the British. They must be destroyed, or any people will suffer the same fate as the Boers of the Transvaal.

Despite the triumphant victories of the Wehrmacht, the mood of the people was gloomy - and not only because the first British bombs had already fallen on the German fools. More than half of the population of the Reich remembered the last war and, most importantly, remembered how it began and how it ended. Hitler's reckless promises to end the war this year with a victorious landing in England clearly did not come true, and the war more and more made itself felt.

Already in the winter of 1939, there was a shortage of coal and basic foodstuffs in all cities. The coming winter also did not bode well.

Therefore, Hitler, acutely feeling the silent question from his people: when will all this end, he was internally worried, because he already perfectly understood that everything would not end very soon and, most likely, would not bring anything good to Germany again.

He frantically searched for a way out of the situation.

The best outcome would be peace with England. A military alliance with Stalin... He proposed it openly.

He offered it out of fear of the huge Stalinist army, hoping to buy time by promising Stalin what, in his opinion, the Moscow dictator wanted most of all. But in the course of preparing for the meeting with Molotov, he convinced himself that a real alliance with Stalin could solve all his problems. The accession of the USSR with its human and material resources to the Axis powers would show England (and the United States as well) that the continuation of the war is dangerous and that some kind of agreement must be reached. He waited for an answer from Moscow every day. But there was no answer.

The catastrophe of the Duce army in Albania reminded Hitler of the uncompromising nature of the British, who were ready to fight him as much as they wanted (even longer than with Napoleon), just to win the last battle in this war as well.

Thrown into the sea near Dunkirk, the British again came from the sea, this time from the Mediterranean, landing on Crete, on Lemnos and in Greece itself. They received air bases there, from which they could reach the precious oil reserves of the Ploeshtinsky basin.

Day and night, British convoys go to the Mediterranean through the Atlantic and Gibraltar, through the Indian Ocean and the Suez Canal, Hitler already caught himself thinking that every minute he expected some new dirty trick from the British.

The fears of the Fuhrer were constantly fanned by Admiral Raeder. He literally walked

on the heels of Hitler, proving that the fate of the British Empire should be decided not in the battle over England, which, from the point of view of the commander-in-chief of the fleet, has not yet yielded any significant results, but in the Mediterranean Sea, which is the core of the entire British imperial system. Back in November 1939, the General Staff developed a plan for a major operation "South-East". This plan provided for the invasion of German troops into the Middle East and further into Central Asia and India.

The operation was just planned for the end of 1940 - the beginning of 1941. Isn't it time to start implementing it?

In the following days, orders poured into the General Staff to prepare operational documents for Operations Marita (occupation of all of Greece), Operation Felix (capture of Gibraltar), Operation Isabella (occupation of Portugal). At the same time, along with the Italians and Spaniards, the Fuhrer tried to inspire France to take joint action to finally expel the British from the Mediterranean.

The General Staff received a demand to strengthen the coastal defenses of Spain. It was necessary to take care of the concentration of German troops in Italian ports for boarding transport.

While these events were taking place, the long-awaited response came from Moscow to the proposal made by Hitler on November 18, inviting the homeland of the Comintern to join the Anti-Comintern Pact.

"Urgently! Top secret to the Reich Foreign Minister in person

N 2362 of November 25 Received on November 26, 1940 - 08:50

Molotov invited me to his place this evening and, in the presence of Dekanozov, stated the following:

The Soviet government studied the content of the statement made by the Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs during the final conversation on November 13, and took the following position:

The Soviet government is ready to accept the draft Four Powers Pact on political cooperation and mutual economic assistance ... on the following terms:

1. It is envisaged that German troops will immediately leave Finland, which, according to the 1939 treaty, is included in the Soviet zone of influence. At the same time, the Soviet Union guarantees peaceful relations with Finland and the protection of German economic interests in Finland.
2. It is envisaged that in the coming months the security of the Soviet Union from the straits is guaranteed by the conclusion of a mutual assistance pact between the Soviet Union and Bulgaria, which is geographically located within the security zone of the Black Sea borders of the Soviet Union, as well as by the construction of a base for the ground and naval forces of the USSR in area of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles on a long-term lease.
3. It is envisaged that the zone south of Batumi and Baku ... towards the Persian Gulf is recognized as the center of the territorial aspirations of the Soviet Union .... The protocol should indicate that in case Turkey refuses to accede to the Pact ... Italy and The USSR will jointly develop and practically apply military and diplomatic sanctions. A separate agreement must be made regarding this.

In addition, it is necessary to agree on a third secret protocol between Germany and the Soviet Union regarding Finland.

Schulenburg".

After rather cursorily reviewing the answer from Moscow to his proposals for the division of the world in general and the "ownerless" property of the British Empire in particular, Hitler asked his foreign minister:

- What did he cling to Finland and Bulgaria? What, is he going to land in England himself and drive the English out of the Mediterranean?

All the Fuhrer's thoughts were occupied with Operation Felix, which represented an excellent opportunity to slam the British with short but powerful blows.

"Unfortunately, my Fuhrer," Ribbentrop replied diplomatically, "there have been no changes in Moscow's position during these two weeks.

"Look at the map," Hitler said peevishly, "and you will see Cannes, which no one has seen yet.

In the north, Stalin goes to the border of Norway, in the south - to the border of Yugoslavia and Greece, then he annexes Turkey and goes to the border with Iraq.

Ribbentrop was silent.

"So let this vile extortionist," Hitler continued with a shrill note in his voice, "go to hell. We can do without him. He seems to want to take over the whole world without firing a single shot!

- And what will we answer Moscow? the Minister dared to ask.

"I will tell you when the time is right. So far, nothing. We have been waiting for their response for a long time. Let them wait too.

All Hitler's thoughts are directed to the Mediterranean Sea, to the Mediterranean noose, beautiful as a work of art, in which the accursed Albion will suffocate. The Fuhrer personally consulted with the Duce and Ciano. Hitler demanded that Italian aircraft operate day and night over the Mediterranean Sea, preventing the British from behaving there as in a domestic swimming pool. And hurry up and push the British out of Egypt beyond the Suez Canal. Ciano stated that it would be good to do this at the same time as the German invasion of Greece. Here Hitler exploded and yelled that he warned Chianov's father-in-law against any adventures on the continent. Perhaps the count forgot that Germany does not have a common border with Greece and, in order to reach it, German troops will have to pass through the territories of three countries - Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. And it is still unknown whether they will agree to let the Wehrmacht through and whether they will have to fight their way to the aid of the Duce with battles and losses. This landing could have been carried out long ago, if not for the criminal inaction of the Italian fleet. His vile cowardice and unwillingness to fight!

Ciano, accustomed to Hitler's heightened emotionality, remained completely calm and noted that such rumors about the Royal Italian Navy were spread by the British, that the fleet had already carried out several bold operations, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy.

To be honest, Hitler did not know about any of those "daring operations" that the Italian fleet carried out.

Ciano also did not know anything about this, but he knew something else: the day before yesterday (i.e. November 25)

With the help of gogant efforts, the Duce managed to push a powerful fleet formation into the sea, consisting of the battleships Vittorio Veneto and Giulio Cesare, a division of six heavy cruisers and several destroyer flotillas, so that they intercepted and destroyed an English convoy coming from Malta under the cover of light forces.

What neither Hitler nor Ciano knew yet was the fact that it was at the moment of their conversation that British light cruisers and destroyers attacked an Italian formation west of Sardinia, immediately covering the enemy with heavy fire and causing serious damage to the cruiser and three destroyers, one of which had to take away in tow. From such behavior of the British, the nerves of the commander of the Italian compound, Admiral Campioni, again could not stand it.

He suggested that there were large British forces nearby. And I wasn't wrong. Soon, the English battlecruiser Rinaun appeared on the horizon, and planes in the sky, indicating the presence of an aircraft carrier in the area.

Campioni decided that he had had enough, and before the Rinaun could fire a salvo of its main caliber, he ordered to leave, dragging the wrecked destroyer in tow.

- What is he up to? - asked Stalin, having familiarized himself with Hitler's directive No. 18, which intelligence obtained, according to Golikov, with great difficulty.

- Everything is very logical, - moving a pointer on the map, explained Marshal Shaposhnikov. The Germans are locking up the Mediterranean Sea, capturing Gibraltar and the Suez Canal zone. With a simultaneous attack on Greece, they deprive the British of any chance of waging war in the Mediterranean basin and cut off the British mother country from most of the empire. The map turns out to be a very elegant operation.

- So there will be no landing in England? - The leader even took the pipe out of his mouth and put it on table.

"One does not interfere with the other," Shaposhnikov replied. - It is very possible that if the operation succeeds, the British may capitulate or agree to German peace conditions without waiting for the German landing. The Mediterranean Sea is the key to victory in a European war.

- What are you offering? - Stalin asks the crown question.

The marshal's pointer moves to the Black Sea region.

- If the Germans decide to strike at Greece, then they expose themselves to the blow of our most powerful southern grouping as part of the Southwestern and Southern Fronts.

- And why do we need to, - Stalin asks sullenly, - to save the British?

"The whole of Europe must be saved, Comrade Stalin," Shaposhnikov notes cautiously. Leader is silent.

There was clearly a split among the top leadership of the Armed Forces of the USSR. The General Staff, headed by Kirill Meretskov, proposes to strike with the main forces directly at Germany through Poland, and an auxiliary strike at the Balkans in order to cut off Germany from oil sources. The People's Commissariat of Defense, headed by Semyon Timoshenko, the commanders of the two main districts - the Special Western and Kiev - Pavlov and Zhukov, on the contrary, believe that the main blow should be delivered in the south, taking Germany into a semicircle. The march through the Balkan countries is easier to file and ideologically as a liberation one. But the call for help gives special specificity to the liberation campaigns. About the so-called international aid. The right people to provide

this call, there were, and besides, there were actually no German troops there. But any blow in this direction inevitably led to a clash with Germany. So I wanted to get the maximum possible without a shot.

From November 17 to November 20, the "Bilateral operational-strategic game on cards" was held at the General Staff under the leadership of Tymoshenko.

Exactly three days of games "blue" - the Germans were surrounded, defeated and destroyed. The army and navy met at Königsberg.

From November 20 to 22, the Western Special Military District also famously played, which swiftly took Warsaw, crossing the Vistula and Oder on the move.

From November 23 to 25, the Kiev Special Military District, headed by General Zhukov, played. This is where it all got tricky. In reality, there were no German troops in front of Zhukov's front. There were Romanian and Bulgarian armies and insignificant forces in the former Czechoslovakia (now called the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia), which fell under the attack of the adjacent flanks of Zhukov and Pavlov. From November 26 to 28, the Odessa Military District, headed by General Cherevichenko, played. The task of the district, interacting with the ships of the Black Sea Fleet and the Danube Flotilla, was the rapid capture of ports from Constanta to Varna by combined attacks from the sea and land, with access to the Bulgarian-Turkish border.

After reviewing the results of the games, Stalin noticed that even in theory, the interaction between the army, aviation and navy leaves much to be desired, but in practice there is probably no interaction at all.

Shaposhnikov still somehow tried to resolve these issues, but after he left the post of chief of the General Staff, Meretskov almost forgot about the fleet against the backdrop of thousand-kilometer fronts. The fleet has its own global tasks, which, by the way, no one in the fleet itself knows, since they are fully known only to Comrade Stalin.

Comrade Stalin was well aware of these tasks.

"Whoever owns the sea, owns the world," Admiral Mahan formulated, and the leader of all peoples understood that the old American naval theorist was right, despite all his bourgeois unscience. Lenin, at the mention of the word "fleet", broke into a cry, proving its complete uselessness for the proletarian state, for it was the fleet that frayed all the nerves of the leader of the world proletariat, first putting him in an idiotic position by the Ice Crossing, then by his wholesale flight together with Wrangel to Bizerte from the communist dream and finally finished off the Kronstadt rebellion. The vengeful Ilyich immediately ordered to sell to Germany all the remnants of the Baltic Fleet at the price of scrap metal, to arrest and shoot all the still surviving naval officers of the imperial fleet (up to and including midshipmen), and the sailors, if it was impossible to shoot or imprison for participating in the Kronstadt mutiny and aiding Wrangel, drive home.

"Comrade Lenin is sick, and we will not disturb him," Stalin used to say then, starting an open sabotage of the instructions of his leader and teacher. Using his already fairly strong power, Stalin ordered the release of most of the arrested naval officers, who had not yet been shot or tortured to death.

Officers are needed, and Stalin tried to keep them at least until the machine of unprecedented militarism he had launched produced new, class-like naval officers. And he completed his task. Those whom he, at great risk, saved in the 1920s, were shot without much pity in 37-38, since the system of naval schools deployed by Stalin had already managed to produce 14 graduations.

But Comrade Stalin's contribution to the creation of a new fleet was not limited to concerns about its personnel.

Stalin suffered from the fact that the naval program had to be somewhat slowed down due to a lack of stock materials and because of the sabotage of the performers. But he continued to firmly believe that it was his fleet that was destined to put an end to England's maritime dominion. As for the US and Japanese fleets, according to the leader, by the time the Stalinist program was completed, they should have already destroyed each other. The French fleet had already been virtually destroyed. The British had to deal with the Germans and Italians. Thus, the leader thought according to the scheme of the naval Olympic Games: the Red Fleet went straight to the final, where he was supposed to meet with the British and, of course, win.

Never before in the world has there been such a grandiose and ambitious program. By the end of 1946, it was planned to build 16 battleships and 16 battle cruisers, 2 aircraft carriers, 28 light cruisers, 20 leaders, 144 destroyers, 96 patrol boats, 204 minesweepers and 408 submarines.

Among the Stalinist military leaders, Admiral Kuznetsov was perhaps the most honest and courageous person, as far as the criminal-wolf situation that reigned in the corridors of the Kremlin allowed. In 1939, taking the post of People's Commissar of the Navy from Stalin's hands, the young admiral, who even in his own dreams had never seen himself superior to the commander of a ship, dared to set an indispensable condition for the leader of all peoples: to stop shooting naval specialists and free everyone who ended up in the camps. straight from the decks of warships. Stalin chuckled but agreed. And how many times Stalin forgot about this, how many times Kuznetsov reminded him of this, fighting for each of his people like a gladiator, because every minute he risked his own head. And he almost always got his way.

The activity of the noble People's Commissar of the Navy in saving sailors from the fangs of the Stalinist NKVD is worthy of a separate book. This applied not only to admirals, but also to any sailors and even civilian employees. There are some very interesting documents on this subject. Let's say a student is arrested on charges of preparing a "terrorist attack." He is required to name all the members of the "terrorist organization" by name.

Having received a couple of times on the ears from the investigator, the student lists all his acquaintances, among whom is a naval lieutenant. The lieutenant is summoned to the NKVD and shown the statement of the unfortunate student. In the vast majority of cases, the lieutenant denies everything, writes an explanation on this occasion, and they let him go in peace. But there were cases when a naval officer, out of fear (or for some other unknown reason), admitted everything that was written. They laughed at him and let him go too. This is a privilege that sailors had from 1939 to 1941, thanks to the courage of Admiral Kuznetsov. And he remained that way until the end of his days.

If Stalin sincerely loved the fleet and even allowed Admiral Kuznetsov to keep a certain number of "class enemies" in the cadres, then the leader of all peoples had some strange attitude towards the air force. With all his desire, Stalin could not declare himself the creator of the domestic fleet and was officially considered only the creator of the Northern Fleet, which was immortalized on a huge marble slab immured in the rock at the main base of the fleet in Polyarny.

As for aviation, the Pravda newspaper wrote back in September 1936: "We, who observe every day the work of Comrade Stalin in the field of aviation, his concern for its human cadres, can say without any exaggeration that the creator and The creator of our Soviet aviation, both its material part and its personnel, is our teacher and leader Comrade Stalin. And at the 18th Party Congress, Stalin was

proclaimed

"head of our aviation", "great designer", "chief technologist", "father of all heroic victories" and "father of all heroes".

And I must say that all these quotes, no matter how ridiculous they may look today, were not mere verbiage or glorification, if we recall that in the mid-20s, Stalin received from Lenin a huge, poorly trained and undisciplined crowd, called the Red Army, armed royal three-rulers, pikes and checkers, with a small artillery park. But by the end of 1937, the aircraft fleet of the Soviet Air Force exceeded 8,000 combat vehicles, and there was not a single foreign model among them! Add to this dozens of established aviation records, flights of unprecedented range, including a flight over the North Pole to America, count the number of trained engineers, technicians, mechanics, pilots, navigators, radio gunners, and do not forget the aviation infrastructure that has grown out of the ground. , - and you will understand what it means to create a miracle only by the example of the Air Force alone.

Stalin loved pilots so much that he even once offered Valery Chkalov the post of chief of the NKVD, which can be considered the highest manifestation of the leader's love - albeit for a famous, but simple pilot. Chkalov refused, and therefore died soon under very mysterious circumstances. And he is not the only one, for, as the ancients noted, "a loving hand is stronger than all and punishes."

Stalin was afraid of an army created by his own hands. But most of all he was afraid of aviation.

In May 1935, the USSR showed off to an astonished world the largest aircraft ever built, a four-engine giant called the Maxim Gorky. (Gorky himself was still alive and watched from the mausoleum at the May Day celebrations as a huge airship sailed over Red Square, bearing his name on giant wings.) Then it was announced that on May 18 members of the Central Committee and the government, headed by a comrade Stalin. Stalin, of course, was not going to fly and took measures so that members of the government would do the same. Nikolai Blagin, one of the best pilots of the then aviation, was supposed to escort the giant car on the I-5 fighter. Nobody knew that none of the members of the Central Committee was going to follow the campaign scenario. Instead, those who created this winged miracle flew on the plane - engineers, designers, craftsmen and workers with their families. When the air dreadnought sailed majestically over Moscow, Blagin, who took off from another airfield, quickly overtook him, suddenly threw the plane into a dive and crashed into the wing of the car in front of thousands of horrified spectators watching this scene from the ground. Part of the wing, along with the engine, fell off, and the Maxim Gorky, enveloped in fire and smoke, turning over in the air and falling apart, rushed to the ground with a terrible howl, which it crashed into in the fire and thunder of a powerful explosion.

The investigation was the most thorough, since Stalin did not doubt the intentional "terrorist attack", especially since Blagin's connections with the Trotskyists - Baranov and Sergeyev were quickly revealed.

The entire leadership of the then Air Force disappeared within a year, and Yakov Alksnis was placed at the head of the Air Force, who also had to be shot in 1938 for insufficient controllability. On June 27, 1937, fighter pilot Oleg Kapitonov on an I-15 aircraft, flying low over the Stalinist dacha, over which flights were strictly prohibited in a vast area of about 100 square meters. km, crashed into the forest some two hundred meters from the outer fence. In the pilot's tablet, recovered from the wreckage, a map of the area was found and a summer cottage complex was noted.



Almost the entire regiment in which Kapitonov served was arrested. The investigation revealed a plot to kill the leader. In the biography of Kapitonov himself, relatives were found both dispossessed and executed.

The case of the marshals revealed horrifying things in general. Especially how the traitors and "enemies of the people" were going to use aviation, planning to exterminate Comrade Stalin and the entire Bolshevik Central Committee.

Communist ideologues among many myths created one of the most striking. This is a myth about the general innocence of all Stalin's victims from among the top leaders of the army, state security and industry. In reality, it wasn't quite like that. And not even at all. From 1930 to 1941 There have been at least three major coup attempts in the USSR. Moreover, with different political orientations, The main forces of the conspiracies were, of course, state security, the struggle within which never stopped; army and party nomenklatura.

Many were not satisfied with the overly pronounced idea of the planned world campaign. Seeing what Russia has been turned into - into a continuous military camp surrounded by the Gulag, a sufficient number of people in the army, and in the NKVD, and in the CPSU (b) did not want this for various reasons, including those who did not want to tempt fate anymore .

It was these forces that staged an unprecedented pogrom in the army in 1937-38, accompanied by a pogrom of state security and the party.

Tukhachevsky's conspiracy was the most dangerous and prepared. In its initial period, aviation (namely aviation) was supposed to bomb government buildings in the Kremlin "until it was completely destroyed."

Resistance to the Stalinist regime in the pre-war years was massive, although not very noticeable under the granite pressure of unprecedented terror. But since it was impossible to exterminate the entire population of the country, and no one set himself such a task, under this pressure an unprecedented socio-political crisis was ripening, which could only be extinguished by a global war. This crisis, which took on its most acute form in the first days of the war, had a decisive influence on its course, and could have influenced the outcome if Hitler had not been so out of touch with reality. We'll talk more about this later.

But no matter what tasks Stalin set for himself, if he really succeeded in something, it is, according to the apt definition of the historian M. Gefter,

"set in motion the mechanism of permanent civil war", which, in contrast to

Trotsky's "permanent revolution" provoked not so much international crises as internal ones.

Since November 1939, the head of the Air Force was Yakov Smushkevich, by that time Twice Hero of the Soviet Union. Twice a hero, even in our time, is a rarity, and even in those years it was a truly unique phenomenon. Under the name of General Douglas Smushkevich, he fought in Spain and, with his actions in the air, brought even the cold-blooded Hemingway into ecstasy. Upon his return from Spain, Smushkevich received his first gold star.

He earned the second star at Khalkhin Gol, having a reputation as the country's largest specialist in the combat use of aviation. One day, Stalin read a summary of German intelligence, analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of the Soviet military leadership, which said: "Smushkevich can be called Tukhachevsky in the field of aviation." Stalin remembered the comparison of Smushkevich with Tukhachevsky and, for a start, removed him from his post. There was a temptation to shoot him right out of harm's way, but he restrained himself and transferred Smushkevich first to

the post of Inspector General of the Air Force, and then - Assistant Chief of the General Staff for Aviation. Smushkevich regarded all these movements as dismissal, realizing that he had fallen out of favor with the leader.

In place of Smushkevich, the leader, unexpectedly for many, appointed 29-year-old Pavel Rychagov, promoted to general almost directly from lieutenants. A desperate fighter pilot, a virtuoso of aerobatics and air combat, Rychagov, as they say, "was a pilot by the grace of God." At 24, while commanding a squadron in Spain, where he was known as Pablo Palancaré, he once engaged six enemy fighters at once. Having shot down two, he was shot down himself, landing by parachute in the very center of Madrid on Castellano Boulevard. This episode, which later appeared in many feature films about Stalin's adventure in Spain, made an impression on Comrade Stalin himself. Rychagov, a short, dense, strong man, distinguished by a cheerful disposition and truly Russian prowess, liked Stalin. He was awarded the title of Hero and quickly went up the hill on the front line, showing the skills of a capable administrator. He directed aviation operations on Khasan, commanded a group of "volunteer" fighters in China and aviation of the 9th Army during the war with Finland, trying to establish an air bridge with encircled units.

In August 1940, having removed Smushkevich, Stalin summoned Rychagov to him, promoted him to lieutenant general, awarded him another Order of Lenin, and gave him command of the air force.

At this point, the air force was unfolding into a giant armada, which, in terms of the number of combat vehicles, surpassed even the American figures achieved only at the end of the Second World War.

On November 29, Stalin summoned Rychagov, the chief of staff, General Nikishev, and his deputy for armaments and supplies, General Astakhov. The pilots, as usual, started with numbers. If on January 1, 1940, 209 air regiments were deployed in the western military districts, armed with 12,540 combat vehicles of various types, plus 40 long-range aviation regiments with 2,300 heavy bombers, then by the end of the year these numbers were almost doubled. Of course, they will decrease somewhat due to the decommissioning of old aircraft, nevertheless, the number of combat aircraft on January 1, 1940 will be approximately 24,000. The number of flight schools and schools with three-, two- and one-year terms of study has increased almost two and a half times. The number of training aircraft has been increased to 6800 aircraft.

Let us note that by June 22, 1941, Germany, together with its allies, had 4275 aircraft on the Eastern Front, i.e. almost one and a half times less than the USSR had only training aircraft in 1940.

The vast majority of airfields, Rychagov stressed, as prescribed by Comrade Stalin, are as close as possible to the border. Some are up to one kilometer away. Aircraft on takeoff are forced to turn over the territories of neighboring countries, including East Prussia and the German part of Poland.

Rychagov clearly justifies the trust placed in him. Stalin is interested in how his latest innovation was perceived in schools and in the Air Force units. The innovation was that Stalin, tormented by fears of the Air Force, decided to deprive all future pilots of their officer ranks and release them from schools as sergeants on the rights of military service.

Viktor Suvorov in his book "Day" M "describes in detail this Stalinist" innovation "of November 7, 1940, but considers it caused by economic reasons - not a single army in the world, including the Red Army, could contain such a number of officers. Expecting to use up most of the pilots at the first stage of the Thunderstorm, Stalin did not see, they say,

it's okay if they stay sergeants before that. It is possible that it was so, but Suvorov does not note the most important thing. Stalin's "innovation" concerned only pilots. All other aviation specialists, including navigators, aircraft technicians, weather forecasters, PDS service specialists continued to be issued as officers. Absolutely fantastic days have come in the Air Force. Bomber crews, for example, were commanded by Sgt. At the end of the flights, the officers-navigators dispersed to their homes and hotels, rested in the clubs of officers, etc., and the pilots stomped in formation and singing to the barracks. They washed floors, sawed firewood, wore all sorts of outfits, received reprimands from foremen and

were forced to feel their inferiority in front of all other aviation specialists. It was one of the leader's greatest experiments: to turn the basic aviation profession into nothing.

Unlike almost all of his predecessors, Rychagov did not go through the necessary school of political intrigue, since he never served in political commissars and commissars. He was a direct person, sometimes even too much. And he was, remember, only 29 years old.

That is why he honestly answered Stalin that, of course, everyone was dissatisfied with the innovation.

But a resolution was already prepared, which would be adopted in a week (December 7) - on the rejection of the voluntary formation of flight schools and the transition to forced recruitment of persons,

"whose health and educational level meets the requirements of the Air Force flight personnel service."

Who always pleased Comrade Stalin was the tankers. The Soviet Union could rightfully be considered the birthplace of mass conveyor tank building. He also tried to teach the Germans this art, but the Germans turned out to be useless students in every respect. The figures of their tank production caused ironic smiles from all specialists in Moscow, including Comrade Stalin himself. And there was nothing to say about the quality of German tanks. Their latest model, called the T-IV, was a short-barreled, narrow-tracked, gasoline-powered vehicle with 25 mm frontal armor and a top speed of 32 km/h. I could not even believe that this was the last achievement of German military-technical thought. Soviet intelligence was ordered to check if the Germans had any secret tank, which they did not yet display and kept as a surprise. It turned out that not only on the conveyor, but also in development. And the entire German tank fleet was estimated by Soviet intelligence at about 7500 vehicles, which, as it turned out later, was a clear exaggeration.

No one in the USSR, not even the head of the Main Armored Directorate of the Red Army, Lieutenant General Fedorenko and the chief inspector of tank troops, Major General Vershinin, knew exactly the number of the tank fleet. But summing up the applications of the districts, the command of the armored forces found out that after the most intensive exercises in the summer and autumn of 1940,

"in varying degrees of repair (from two hours to overhaul)

needs 21 thousand tanks or 43% of the entire tank fleet located in the districts.

The exercises and field tests showed that the Germans had practically no means of defense against them. As for the tank confrontation, the same tests showed that the projectile from the T-34 tank pierced the armor of the German T-IV tank from a distance of 1500-2000 meters, while the shells of the German tank pierced the armor of the T-34 from a distance of only 500 meters if they hit the side or rear of the T-34. They did not take frontal armor.

But besides the T-34, Stalin was preparing another tank surprise for the astonished world. Nobody else in

the world did not think of a heavy tank. And in the USSR, they not only thought of it, but already set up its mass production and calculated its modernization capabilities for three subsequent models. This tank was called "KV" (Klim Voroshilov) and was a monstrous fighting vehicle for those times weighing almost 50 tons, with 80 mm frontal armor and a 152 mm gun that was absolutely incredible for a tank.

American observers who first saw the KV near Moscow in December 1941 were horrified and amazed. None of them even imagined that such monsters could be riveted in peacetime.

But the main advantage of the T-34 and KV tanks was that they had a diesel engine and could go from one gas station: T-34 at a speed of 50 km per hour - 400 kilometers, KV at a speed of 35 km per hour - 330 kilometers. As for the famous BT-7 tank, which has the ability to change tracks for car wheels, it could reach speeds of up to 60 km per hour on tracks and travel 600 kilometers from one refueling, and when standing on wheels when entering European highways, develop speed up to 86 km/h and cover up to 700 kilometers. These were real blitzkrieg tanks, tanks of a swift offensive. (For comparison: the latest German tank "T-IV" could reach speeds of up to 40 km / h on a good road and travel 150-200 kilometers. Tank "T-Sh" - 40 km / h and travel 150-180 km.)

Artillery, the number of which by the middle of 1941 was supposed to be increased to 100 thousand barrels (including mortars), did not cause much concern to the leader. Here the matter has been correctly set since the old times.

Things have also been put right in the preparation of the upcoming political events. In addition to the celebration of the Constitution Day, it was necessary to competently organize and control the elections in the newly formed Karelian-Finnish SSR, as well as in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, to check and correct the data of the all-Union population census in order to hide the losses from terror and show a steady population growth and, most importantly, the main thing is to hold an all-army conference in parallel with strategic games in order to finally polish the invasion plan, determining its final date.

Winston Churchill did not listen very attentively to the news of the situation on the Greco-Italian front. Yesterday, November 29, the Germans made a powerful raid on Southampton, destroying almost the entire business center of the city with bombs.

Heading to his residence in the morning, Churchill noticed how London had changed. The buildings that were considered the most famous sights of the English capital disappeared.

On all the most famous buildings of churches, monasteries, theaters, ancient palaces, traces of daily and nightly bombings were clearly visible. The bombs hit the Tower of London, but the eight-hundred-year-old walls of the ancient fortress survived. It was worse for the famous majestic St. James Cathedral from Piccadilly - its bell tower collapsed. In the equally famous Drury Lane theater, a bomb, destroying its glass dome, exploded right in the orchestra pit. A huge chandelier collapsed on the seats of the auditorium...

Churchill very carefully read the transcripts of the meeting of the leaders of Germany and the USSR in Berlin, sent to him by intelligence, even together with drafts of new secret protocols. Of course, it would be very unpleasant if these two conspired at least temporarily. If such a thing happened, it is even difficult to imagine the further course of events. Fortunately, as expected, nothing of the sort happened. And it happened just the opposite. Intelligence is increasingly reporting on the transfer of German divisions to the east - to

East Prussia and Poland. A little in Romania. Will Hitler risk attacking Stalin? This is madness. Even according to the data available to the Intelligence, the Russian forces are almost three times larger than the German ones. The military attaché reported from Moscow that he had accurate data on the presence of 10,000 tanks in the Red Army. 10,000 tanks!

It's impressive! Still, there is something positive about the communist regime. At least, the opportunity to arm themselves in peacetime without bearing any responsibility either to the parliament, or even more so to the taxpayers. He, Churchill, would be happy to temporarily introduce a communist regime in England in order to have 10,000 tanks today.

It is not surprising that Hitler froze in some indecision. The surprise he will soon receive will force him to make a more concrete decision than the adventurous plans of landing on our islands or capturing Gibraltar.

Of all that he now has in mind, the most realistic is the plan to invade Greece, although this plan is unlikely to be carried out before mid-March.

And if Stalin speaks out without waiting for Hitler to land on our islands? In the end, he may realize that this landing is being led by the nose and that it is impossible. If he comes out wearing the laurel wreath of the liberator of Europe, then the situation on the continent will be even worse.

Much, of course, will depend on the position of the United States. While the election campaign was going on in the United States, Churchill walked around as if with a thorn in his heart, and when the election results became known, he could not stand his emotions and wrote to Roosevelt:

"I thought it was not proper for me, as a foreigner, to express an opinion on American politics until the elections were over, but now I think that you will not mind if I say that I prayed for your success ..."

Now, when the whole world already felt how Roosevelt was stubbornly pushing his way through the thickets of Congress onto the warpath, Churchill prepared a new letter to the US President, where, in particular, he noted:

"As the end of the year draws near, I believe you will expect me to give you the outlook for 1941. I do this frankly and confidently, because it seems to me that the vast majority of American citizens are convinced that the security of the United States, as well as the fate of our two democracies and the civilization we stand for, is connected with the existence and independence of the British Commonwealth of Nations. . Only in this way will it be possible to preserve in faithful and courageous hands those bastions of sea power on which control over the Atlantic and Indian Oceans depends. Dominance in the Pacific by the fleet of the United States and in the Atlantic by the British fleet is necessary for the security and preservation of the trade routes of our countries, and is the most reliable means to prevent the war from reaching the shores of the United States ... "

Further, enumerating the necessary assistance that he expects in the near future from America, Churchill touched on the unique situation in which, for the first time in the last 130 years, the mainstay of British power, its battle fleet, may fall.

"... Now it is much more difficult than it was during the last war. We are deprived of the support of the French, Italian and Japanese fleets, and above all of the United States fleet, which provided us with such important assistance in decisive years. The enemy is in charge of ports all along the northern and western coasts of France. It increasingly bases its submarines, flying boats and warplanes in these ports...

In the next six or seven months the comparative power of the battleships in the waters of the mother country will decrease and become less than satisfactory. Mr. President, no one will understand better than you that during these months we will have to think for the first time in this war about operations at sea in which the enemy will have two ships, at least as good as two our best and only modern ship..."

Stalin read a copy of Churchill's letter to Roosevelt before the message was sent across the ocean. It was efficiency that Comrade Stalin liked most of all.

From the text of the letter, he realized that the British were already in direct danger of losing their main trump card, with which Britain had been beating the cards of all its enemies for centuries - dominance at sea.

For almost a year now, the most extensive flow of information to the USSR came from England, where Soviet agent Kim Philby was sitting right in the depths of the British secret service. In addition, the NKVD managed to recruit in September 1940 John Cairncross, secretary to a member of the military cabinet, Lord Hankey.

But the most interesting message came from Philby in early December 1940:

"The general directive given to MI5 residencies on the continent, and to the embassies of Britain and Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal, Greece, Hungary and Bulgaria, as well as many countries in South America and Asia, where there are British embassies or consulates, instructs intelligence officers and diplomats in every possible way to exaggerate the rumor about the inevitability of war between Germany and the Soviet Union, which should break out no later than the summer of 1941. Moreover, depending on the specific conditions and the sympathies of the local population and the press, the attacking side in this war should be determined accordingly. An attack can be carried out equally by the Soviet Union against Germany, and Germany against the Soviet Union.

The fact that such an installation was given, Stalin could no longer doubt. Even before receiving this signal from Philby, on November 28, a new message was received from Tokyo from Sorge that the Germans were forming a new reserve army in the Leipzig area, consisting of 40 divisions. 80 divisions are already deployed on the Soviet-German border, another 20 are being transferred from France.

You do not need to be seven spans in the forehead to understand: setting Hitler on the Soviet Union is the only chance for the British to thwart the German invasion of their islands and avoid the long-deserved historical finale.

The leader summons Golikov and Fitin. Both heads of intelligence departments assure the leader that all this is empty talk - the Germans do not even have any plan of war against us yet. And as you know, a German without a plan is like a turtle without a shell. A German cannot live without a plan. The German is not capable of improvisation. And in secret, like us, the Germans are completely incapable of keeping their plans. All their plans are known to us: from the invasion of England to the capture of Gibraltar and the invasion of Greece.

Returning from Stalin, Golikov gathered the heads of all six operations departments of the GRU and gave them something like a lecture on the international position of the Soviet Union. He began with a non-aggression pact and a friendship treaty between the USSR and Germany, calling them "the product of Comrade Stalin's dialectical genius." The prospect of a German attack on the USSR, he said, is not even illusory, but simply fantastic.

England, like France, will soon be defeated and her empire divided between Germany and Japan. The United States - the heart of classical capitalism - for the sake of saving the British Empire and the entire world capitalist system from complete collapse, too

will inevitably go to war against Germany." In the meantime, the Soviet Union will wait patiently until the moment comes to play its future role. As soon as the capitalists bleed and exhaust each other, we will free the whole world.

Being the only one in the Main Intelligence Directorate initiated into the operation "Thunderstorm" and knowing Stalin's attitude to this operation, as well as the fact that the whole plan of the operation is based on the invasion of German troops into England, Golikov, perhaps without realizing his actions, but simply wanting to survive, he began to adjust the intelligence of his service to this fairly simple scheme. They say that he himself was a big fan of the Thunderstorm and was most afraid that Stalin at the last moment would not have the determination to carry out this operation.

Therefore, with his subordinates, who were not privy to global plans, but honestly did their job in the directions indicated by him, Golikov had to explain himself with hints, carefully letting them know what exactly the big bosses wanted to hear from intelligence. Professional and highly experienced intelligence officers who headed the GRU departments turned out to be confused even by setting the tasks that the head of the GRU formulated for them. Golikov told his subordinates: "Do this or vice versa," and no one understood how to do it in order to do it right. But this made it possible for Golikov to cut off too zealous subordinates with the words: "I didn't give you such instructions!" or "You misunderstood me." Most of all, he was afraid that intelligence reports and orientations would not coincide with Stalin's opinion.

As a result of such leadership, the head of the information department, Major General Dubinin, ended up in a psychiatric hospital, and Lieutenant Colonel Novobranets was appointed head of the department.

Unaware of Comrade Stalin's global plans, Rookie, unlike the leader of all peoples and his immediate superior, did not at all believe in Hitler's ability to cross the English Channel and invade England. Back in the days of Ivan Proskurov, through rather simple calculations, the analysts of the department found out that the Sea Lion operation could not be carried out for a very simple reason: the Germans did not have either airborne transport or airborne landing craft to deliver the minimum necessary to the coast of southern England forces in 60 divisions. They do not even have the means to transfer 30 divisions in the first echelon to seize bridgeheads. The scouts calculated the number of boats needed for this and the number available, including barges from all German and French rivers. General Proskurov tried to report all these calculations to Stalin, for which he paid with his head.

However, the sudden disappearance of General Proskurov did not at all convince Lieutenant Colonel Rookie that the Germans were capable of crossing the English Channel.

The easy victory of the Wehrmacht on the Western Front over the combined Franco-British forces shocked many, and most of all Comrade Stalin himself. The leader ordered intelligence to unravel the "secret" of German successes and to reveal that the Germans had come up with something new in the art of war. Soon, an extremely valuable document fell into the hands of intelligence - "The official report of the French General Staff on the Franco-German war of 1939-40." This report was personally handed over to the Soviet military attache in Vichy by the Chief of the General Staff of the French Army, General Gamelin, allegedly saying at the same time: "Take it, study it and see that you do not suffer the same fate."

Gamelin's report was indeed very valuable. In the words of the Rookie himself, he and his subordinates pounced on this report like they were hungry for food. All of these divisions were registered - this made it possible to track both movements and transfers. The recruit began to study the balance of forces during the battle in directions and look for what the Germans came up with new in operational art, where and what is their secret

lightning victory? Perhaps new was the appearance of tank groups, which in terms of numbers corresponded to about two of our tank divisions or a mechanized corps. And, of course, the clear interaction of tanks, artillery, aviation and infantry was striking.

The report was sent to the Chief of the General Staff with recommendations to create large anti-tank artillery formations, entire anti-aircraft artillery divisions, engineering brigades and corps. Then any blow of the enemy will immediately choke in our defenses and the Germans will never be able to pass through our territory, as they did through the French.

With all the developments of the General Staff, the main idea was clearly traced: the war would be waged on foreign territory, with little bloodshed. And now, when they have the entire army on the canal, we have nothing to worry about at all.

Lieutenant Colonel Rookie and this time did not agree with the authorities. According to him, the Germans have already deployed at least 110 divisions on the border with the USSR.

## Chapter 10

On December 5, Brauchitsch and Halder were finally summoned to the Reich Chancellery. Hitler was in a somewhat agitated state, which the generals noticed immediately when they were shown into the office. Barely nodding to those who entered, Hitler continued to pace from corner to corner, nervously rubbing his hands and from time to time stamping his right foot, as if in time with some music that sounded in his head.

The SS men knew their Fuhrer well, and therefore they learned not only to reassure him, but also to convince him. And when that failed, they simply acted on his behalf. The Führer caught them on this several times, arranging grandiose reprimands and tantrums for the leaders of his "black guard", but he was always able to calm him down and convince him that everything was done, even without his knowledge, but well.

Halder also knew Hitler well and, by his appearance, began to fear that this long-awaited conference would turn into a monologue of the Fuhrer, turning into hysteria.

However, the Chief of the General Staff was mistaken. The Führer announced to the generals that the capture of Gibraltar must be carried out no later than January 14, 1941. This is his firm decision, which is not subject to discussion. The invasion of Greece is also a settled matter, but he will make the final decision himself. Preparations should be carried out in such a way as to start the invasion by the beginning of March. He wants to hear from the gentlemen of the generals how they think about the conduct of Operation Felix and how far the preparations have advanced.

Laying out his documents on the table, Halder reported that the operation was to begin with a massive air raid on Gibraltar, which would be accompanied by a powerful artillery strike. This means about 20-30 ammo trains. In addition to ammunition, it is necessary to deliver the artillery itself to Spain. That's 10 more tiers.

Halder reports on the catastrophic situation of the Italians in Albania and looks at Hitler.

Instead of answering, Hitler, leaning his hands on a table on which a map of the western Mediterranean is spread, announces with some solemnity in his voice:



- Lord! I decided to finally occupy France. I mean the southern part of this country.

- Yes, my Fuhrer, - calmly answers the commander-in-chief of the ground forces Brauchitsch, - but we should not forget about the eastern direction. It seems to me reckless at the present time to divert forces and attention from the eastern direction.

"My Fuhrer," Halder interrupts, "the plan for Operation Otto, which was developed under my direction, is already ready. We would like this plan to be framed in the framework of a specific directive, indicating the timing and full schedule of the operation.

The General pauses, waiting for another outburst of Hitler's irritation. But Hitler is silent, suddenly limp in his chair, listening to the Chief of the General Staff with half-closed eyes.

An operational map of the General Staff is spread out on a special table-tablet, dotted with red, blue and green symbols, icons and numbers. Everyone present comes to the table.

How many divisions do we have in the east? Hitler asks.

"One hundred and ten divisions, of which eleven are tank divisions," reports the chief of the General Staff.

It is clear to everyone that this is not enough not only for an attack, but also for an effective defense. These troops must be deployed along the entire border line with the USSR up to and including the Black Sea. Starting a war even with strong blows from the territory of Poland and East Prussia is madness. The Russians will respond with a powerful counterattack towards Romania and the Protectorate, where our flanks are hanging in the air. Therefore, until the final deployment of forces, all plans are pure theory.

The main thing is to forestall the Russians in delivering the first blow. If this can be done, then there will be an excellent opportunity for a quick encirclement of the main forces of the Red Army, concentrated on ledge balconies. The configuration of the theater of operations, which expands to the east like a funnel, dictates the need for a decisive defeat of the Russian forces to the Kiev-Minsk-Chudskoye Lake line, especially since the main forces of the Red Army are concentrated to the west of this line. In this case, the task is not to push the Soviet troops behind this line, but to destroy them. The result of the operation is the capture of the original base, a kind of land bridge, which defined the Smolensk region for the subsequent attack on the capital of the Bolsheviks - Moscow, in order to occupy it before the autumn thaw.

Thus, the main blow is delivered to the north of the Pripjat region due to favorable road conditions and the possibility of a direct offensive into the central regions of Russia and the Baltic. The second strike comes from Romania and Southern Poland (or only from Southern Poland, if that is the case). The campaign must be won by a single echelon of troops without significant reserves. The Eastern Army will have 3 million men, 600,000 horses and 600,000 motor vehicles. The Chief of the General Staff draws the attention of those present to the fact that the reserve of personnel for the army has 400 thousand people and can only cover losses until the autumn of 1941.

But Hitler suddenly straightened up and declared that he approved in principle the plan proposed by Halder, but was surprised why the plan ignored his oral instructions given earlier to Brauchitsch and Halder that the main goal of the operation should not be Moscow, but Ukraine and the Baltic states. For us, the capture of the capital is not so important in comparison with the achievement of other goals.

Brauchitsch dared to object that, apart from the moral significance of the capture of Moscow, the capital of the USSR is the largest communications center in all of Russia and the center of the military industry.

Hitler silenced the commander-in-chief of the ground forces with a look and said: "Only completely ossified brains, brought up on the ideas of past centuries, think of nothing else but the capture of the enemy's capital."

The resolution of the meeting read: "The tasks of the ground forces are to be defined as follows: with the support of aviation, at any cost, destroy the best personnel of the Russian army, in order to thereby disrupt the planned and full-fledged use of large Russian forces."

Further, the Fuhrer's dissenting opinion was included in the plan:

"If the OKH (High Command of the Ground Forces) considers the direction of the main attack on Moscow to be the criterion for the success of the entire campaign, since the main enemy forces deployed in this direction will be defeated here, then the Fuhrer considers and demands that the central army group, after the destruction of Soviet troops in Belarus, first would turn part of its strong mobile groups to the north and south to capture the Baltic states and Ukraine, and then would resume the offensive against Moscow.

The ego meant that the General Staff officers had to redo the plan.

Hitler closed the meeting in a conciliatory manner, vaguely declaring that "we must solve all European continental problems in 1941 in order to be able to take action against the United States in 1942.

The American heavy cruiser Tuscaloosa easily and gracefully cut through the emerald waves of the Caribbean Sea with its swift bow. The white foam of the bow breaker was carried along the sides of the cruiser and carried astern into the seething stream from the working propellers. A middle-aged man in a white panama and a wrinkled home jacket sat in a wicker chair on the poop of a cruiser, holding a spinning rod in his hands. Behind the chair stood several people in uniform and civilian clothes, demonstrating with their whole appearance that they were not interested in anything but fishing.

On the mast of the cruiser, next to a small state flag, which also plays the role of a naval one, a huge blue flag fluttered in the warm south wind with outstretched gilded wings of a white-tailed eagle, whose chest was decorated with the heraldic shield-standard of the President of the United States of America.

Everyone on the ship, from the commander to the civilian Filipino bartender, was filled with the awareness of the opportunity to join history.

The president's sea voyage on the Tuscaloosa was a big surprise to everyone, including the State Department. Foreign diplomats buzzed like disturbed wasps, trying to figure out what caused such events that were not provided for by any protocol. The British embassy was especially alarmed, believing that after his victory in the elections, Roosevelt lost interest in the European war and began to carelessly spend precious time. Officially, the White House announced that the purpose of the President's trip is to inspect some sites for the construction of new bases recently acquired in the West Indies. This looked more plausible, since among the persons accompanying Roosevelt there was not a single person capable of giving him advice or even information on the most serious problems of Europe and the Far East. The only exception, but a common one during the long years of Franklin Roosevelt's presidency, was Harry Hopkins - his old friend, who did not hold any official posts, was at times elevated to the rank of adviser, but played the role of a whole conclave of gray cardinals under the president.

The version that the president went fishing seemed very plausible. So plausible that Ernest Hemingway radioed the cruiser, pointing to the accumulation of fish in the Mona Strait, advising the president to use "a feathered hook with a piece of lard impaled on it."

During the day, Roosevelt talked with Hopkins, listened to the advice of his Dr. McIntyre, went fishing, or simply relaxed, sitting in a chair on the poop.

Correspondents, however, did not report that from time to time (quite often) Navy seaplanes landed aboard the Tuscaloosa, delivering mail from the White House, including a huge amount of government papers sent to the president.

On December 9, the first message came on board the Tuscaloosa that the British had launched an offensive against Italian troops in Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia, i.e. in all areas of Mussolini's revived Roman Empire. This caused some surprise, since everyone expected the opposite - an Italian offensive to push the British beyond the Suez Canal. Roosevelt requested confirmation of the information.

The flying boat "Catalina", famously landing at the very side of the "Tuscaloosa", quickly delivered the necessary documents. Navy Secretary Knox and US Navy Commander Admiral Stark followed.

The army of Marshal Graziani, after the first blow of the British, turned into a stampede, leaving military equipment, warehouses with ammunition and fuel. The British are rapidly moving towards the Libyan border, at the same time clearing the territory of Ethiopia and Sudan from the Italian garrisons.

Standing behind the president's chair on the poop of the cruiser, they reported to him their vision of the situation, while the president himself seemed to be completely absorbed in the process of fishing.

The good face of the president, his democratic convictions and confidence that the social system existing in the United States, which guarantees its citizens all the freedoms and opportunities conceivable in human society, is the best that humanity has come up with over 50 centuries of its historical existence, made it in the eyes of European dictators an incompetent statesman, stuck in a swamp of publicity, democratic laws and parliamentary procedures.

He often repeated that European dictators Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini were "possessed by the devil" in their obsession with world hegemony. Back in 1939, he predicted the inevitability of a fight between Hitler and Stalin as the inevitability of a change in the time of day - day and night. But Moscow and Berlin did not hear the words of the American president, since in both centers of world totalitarianism he was never taken seriously from the only understandable military-aggressive point of view in these centers. The analytical reports of the intelligence officers painted the image of an incurably ill old man with legs weary, ambitious enough, hardworking enough, no doubt intelligent and capable of leading a man who was put on by the Jews (view from Berlin) and the exploiting classes (view from Moscow) in order to make profits and excess profits from the money and goods put into circulation.

True, both Moscow, Berlin and Tokyo understood (and saw) that the United States industry could potentially forge mountains of weapons, but with one indispensable condition - if there is a buyer for it.

The US arms program, which has become an easy prey for almost all intelligence agencies in the world, was not taken seriously, firstly, because of too astronomical numbers and, secondly: who

will this weapon fight?

Are these sleek people in bowlers and ties playing tennis and swimming in pools?

Everyone wanted to see how America would behave if it were attacked like Poland or Finland, or at least became the target of merciless bombing like England? The answers were different, but it must be said that analysts, to give them their due, have always agreed that no one is able to attack America at the present time and with the current state of military equipment. Although the distant American garrisons in the Philippines, Wake, the Aleutian and Hawaiian Islands can, in principle, be attacked, and even delivered a crushing blow to these objects, which, of course, is not capable of putting an end to the United States, but is quite capable of putting them in their place for a long time discourage the desire to deal with world problems.

Therefore, the presidents of the United States were not particularly studied, and even more so - they did not study Franklin Roosevelt at all, since he was a cripple chained to an armchair, and every day everyone expected that he himself would be removed from office for health reasons.

"Simply amazing," Hitler once said, after watching another American Western,

how such a large and dynamic country endures at the head of itself

a cripple who can't even go to the closet himself?"

Unlike his opponents, Roosevelt was the only politician in those years who saw things in all their reality and had the means to wage precisely that very global war, the rules of which were dictated by the conditions of the industrial age. As the only sober politician, he already saw that, as a result of the ever-brightening flames of global conflict, world domination, in the name of which Stalin and Hitler are ready to sacrifice millions of lives of their subjects, will be presented to the United States like an orange on a silver tray. Of course, in the next 10-15 years you will have to do a lot of work, and then all processes will go automatically.

First of all, it is necessary to thwart all attempts to conclude peace between England and Germany. England must have as many weapons as she wants. She can only get this weapon from us. But what if she no longer has money?

One way or another, but this issue must be resolved in the very near future.

The second is the inevitable conflict between the current robbers - Stalin and Hitler. One look at the map is enough to see the most ideal version of this conflict. Hitler starts and reaches about the Volga, where he runs out of breath and is driven back. Well, if this process lasted two or three years. This will force him to withdraw his army from Europe and dissolve it in the vast fields and forests of Russia. At the same time, measures must be taken so that the Soviet Union does not collapse and fall apart, even if Stalin had to move his capital to Magadan. It is even hard to believe in the possibility of such an ideal option. Intelligence reports tell a completely different story. Stalin has such a superiority in all indicators of the armed forces that Hitler would have to go crazy to dare to throw himself at this monster of iron and steel.

But Stalin! If he starts, the situation will become unpredictable. And everything suggests that he intends to do just that, waiting for the moment when Hitler and the British grapple in long and bloody battles. It is unlikely that after the British offensive in North Africa, Hitler would send a large force there, if at all.

Most likely, he will climb into Greece, but everything should end there quickly enough. He can put a few mines on the road, say, in Yugoslavia, but it remains to be seen whether they will work. Stalin is waiting for his landing in England. But it is also clear that there will be no landing. Glory to the Creator that Stalin does not understand this, and therefore, we must make every effort so that he does not understand this. In other words, it is necessary to find a way to keep him on the chain for the time being. All this is very risky, but it can be calculated if our intelligence operates in sync with the British ... and German.

But the most difficult is the other. How to raise America to participate in a global war? How to send millions of Americans dressed in unusual military uniforms to all corners of the earth to secure and consolidate our hegemony in the new post-war world? Without solving this most difficult task, all other plans will become purely academic and practically meaningless ...

The spinning reel began to spin rapidly. Roosevelt tried to stop her, but the too big fish vomited on itself.

Strong sailor's hands took the spinning from the President's hands.

Roosevelt leaned back wearily in his chair and turned to the Commander-in-Chief of the US Navy, Admiral Stark, standing behind him:

- Are you saying, Harold, that the Pacific Fleet has completed the entire cycle of summer-autumn exercises?

"Yes, sir," the admiral replied.

"Let the fleet stay in Hawaii, at Pearl Harbor," Roosevelt ordered, reminding the admiral that he, the president, was also the Supreme Commander of the US armed forces.

- At Pearl Harbor? the admiral was surprised. - for how long?

"Until further notice," the president explained.

"But, Mr. President," the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy tried to object, "people need rest, and ships need repairs, some need major repairs. All this is possible, as you well know, only on West Coast bases. The base at Pearl Harbor is completely unsuitable for this.

"Give orders to Admiral Richardson at once," the President interrupted Stark. "The fleet remains in Hawaii until further notice. The Pacific Fleet must constantly play the role of a pistol pointed at the temple of Tokyo, so that they would beware of engaging in open robbery. The robber must always have a police officer in front of him. Give the order to Richardson directly through the Tuscaloosa radio station ...

"Frank," the President turned to the Minister of Marine standing on the other side, "does your California ranch have a garden hose?"

Colonel Knox even choked with surprise.

- Yes, sir. Of course there is.

"What would you do if your neighbor's house caught fire and he didn't have a garden hose?" Would you give him yours? the president kept asking.

"I suppose so, sir," answered the Minister of Marine embarrassedly, not understanding what he was getting at.

the president.

"Why would you do that, Mr. Knox, instead of telling your neighbor that you should have gone ahead and bought your own hose?"

"In California," Knox explained, "fires are a real disaster. If someone starts and does not put out in time, then everyone will burn. So I better give him my hose before my house burns down too.

"That's the crux of the problem," Roosevelt agreed, addressing no one in particular...

Meanwhile, the sailors dragged a medium-sized shark onto the deck, which desperately wriggled under the blows of the hooks, caught on a piece of lard ...

On December 16, Roosevelt returned to Washington. The next day, he called a press conference at which he openly stated:

"There is absolutely no doubt in the minds of the vast majority of Americans that the best immediate defense of the United States is the success of Britain in its self-defence."

The President went on to point out that England should have been lent money to buy American war materials so that the gallant British could continue the fight.

"I want to illustrate this with a clear example," said Roosevelt. "Suppose there is a fire in the neighbor's house, and I have a garden hose ..."

It made the strongest impression: give me the hose before your house catches fire.

No one saw anything dangerous or even radical in the president's proposal to lend the British a garden hose for their heroic and (as it seemed) unequal struggle against Hitler. It is not known whether anyone expected to get this hose back, but Roosevelt's brilliant performance ensured the passage of the already prepared law on

lend-lease - the strangest and most unusual law in a country that has officially declared itself neutral ...

(In this regard, the characterization of Roosevelt, given in one of the post-war analyzes conducted by German generals, is interesting: "The United States of America, which now claims to be the masters of the whole world, lost fewer people in the war than Germany or Russia lost in each battle, and the number of battles Almost 40 million infantrymen, tankers, gunners, pilots and sailors died in World War II. America lost about three hundred thousand on all fronts during the four years of the global war, including fierce battles in the Pacific against Japan.

Human.

In his successful leadership of World War II, Franklin Roosevelt did not commit a single major military mistake. In this respect, no one can compare with him from the conquerors of the past, starting with Julius Caesar. He was a master of modern warfare. Even such powerful, energetic and brilliant personalities as Hitler and Stalin were, by and large, turned out to be just rapiers, tools in the hands of Roosevelt. Conqueror-adventurers, destroying and sweeping away everything in their path, often do not

do nothing but pave the way for their more cold-blooded and calculating enemy, who crushes them and begins to erect his own building on their ruins.

So Napoleon, by and large, did nothing else but ensured England's world hegemony for almost two centuries, and Charles XII paved the foundation of the empire of Peter the Great with his campaigns. So Hitler, by the same token, merely handed over the British Empire to the hands of the United States.

Even before the official entry into the war, Roosevelt actually snatched two almost certain victories from the hands of Germany: over England and over the USSR, using an unprecedented method of conducting indirect military operations, the Lend-Lease law. At the end of 1940, the only source of replenishment of strategic raw materials and military equipment for England was the United States. But the Neutrality Act passed in the US threatened to cut Britain off from that one remaining source, leaving England with a perfectly natural solution: peace talks with Germany. I must say that if England had taken this wise step, the British Empire would have existed to this day. The Soviet Union would have been crushed, and instead of a thriving Bolshevism, we would, at worst, now see a peaceful, unarmed Russia developing in some form of social democracy. But none of this coincided with Roosevelt's plans. He could not allow Germany to seize dominance over the Euro-Asian space in partnership with Britain's world-dominating maritime power. To do this, bypassing the law on neutrality, Franklin Roosevelt invented "Lend-Lease", which enabled England, and later Russia, to fight Germany, relying on unlimited stocks of American weapons and raw materials. The audacity of this stunt was amazing, and the disguise downright ludicrous as Roosevelt pushed the bill through a stunned Congress mesmerized by the president's revolutionary thinking.)

On December 18, Halder and Brauchitsch submitted to Hitler for approval what the generals believed was the final plan of military action against the Soviet Union.

The Fuhrer was gloomy. On December 8, a message came that near Cuba, British ships had intercepted the German blockade breaker *Idarwald* with a cargo of rubber and nickel. The valiant crew of the breaker immediately opened the kingstones, set fire to the ship and tried to get away in boats. The British landed the prize party on the *Idarwald*, put out the fire, but they could not figure out the kingstone system, and the ship sank. The team was taken prisoner.

On December 9, the message came at last about the beginning of new fighting in North Africa. However, by the end of the day it turned out that not the Italians, but the British, went on the offensive.

The next day, confirmation of this incredible fact was received. After a night attack on Italian airfields on the Libyan border, the British attacked the positions of the Italians, who immediately fled. And those who did not have time to escape began to surrender in masses.

Already on the third day of the British offensive in Berlin, they sorted out the situation.

All military operations in the desert were reduced to the fact that the 7th British Panzer Division, having overtaken its infantry, rushed after the fleeing Italians and captured whom it overtook. Roughly the same thing happened in Albania, and had there been a desert, as in Africa, and not an almost impenetrable mountainous area, the Greeks might have already entered Rome.

On December 10, Hitler signed a directive on the conduct of Operation *Attila*, and on December 13, on the conduct of Operation *Marita*. The fact is that Germany did not have a common border with Italy and would not be able to help the Duce if the British landed on Italian territory.

Operation Atgila, as you know, provided for the occupation of southern France with access to the Spanish and Italian borders. It was conceived in connection with the capture of Gibraltar, but by this time it was no longer up to Gibraltar.

Now Operation Attila has acquired a new meaning: to promptly come to the aid of the Duce if the British kick Italy out of the war, and to punish Franco by occupying Spain, and if the opportunity arises, to shoot him himself as a traitor.

Things in Romania were even worse. Slashed by the territorial claims of its neighbors, Stalinist appetites and German-Hungarian intrigues, Romania seethed and threatened to collapse altogether as a state.

Hitler was shown a map: the distance between the Soviet troops deployed on the Romanian border and the Ploiesti basin was less than 100 kilometers. One short dagger blow, Halder explained, and all the military equipment of the Wehrmacht turns into a pile of dead

gland.

There was only one way out: to immediately occupy Romania under any pretext. Hitler summoned Antonescu to Berlin on 22 December in order to sign a treaty for Romania's accession to the Axis powers and to obtain a legal basis for any intervention.

It was more difficult with the Finns. The winter war with the Soviet Union literally threw Finland into the arms of Berlin, in which the Finns saw not only a guarantor of their future security, but also, to a certain extent, an instrument of possible revenge. Soviet robbery was neither forgotten nor taken for granted. The whole country was still living in the recent war, not wanting to come to terms with the loss of territories so vital to it.

Finnish intelligence was well aware of Moscow's intentions to eventually capture the rest of Finland. However, for this it was not necessary to have good intelligence. It was enough to read the newspapers. The outcome of a new war without the Mannerheim line did not cause any illusions in anyone. Therefore, the Finns, knowing about the transfer of German troops to the east, decided to no longer try to bring the Germans to clean water, but with the most innocent look to offer them to place part of their troops on Finnish territory, frankly considering the Germans to be fools.

The Germans did not fall for this bait, but offered the Finns the so-called "transit agreement", i.e. an agreement on the right to transfer German troops to Norway through the territory of Finland.

On December 16, the Chief of the Finnish General Staff, Heinrichs, arrived in Berlin, accompanied by the chief operative, General Talvela. Together with the Finnish military attache in Berlin, General Horn, they presented to Halder their intelligence documents on the concentration of Soviet troops in the Baltic states and on the border with East Prussia, as well as plans for the deployment of the Baltic Fleet. The Finns' data matched that of German intelligence, but the figures brought by Heinrichs caused Halder some confusion.

The invaluable combat experience of the Finnish general in the winter war against the USSR became the subject of a lengthy lecture that Heinrichs read to the leading officers of the German General Staff.

The weakest point, according to the Chief of the Finnish General Staff, is the disgusting communication, which in itself is unreliable and completely unprotected, giving the enemy easy access to his channels. Operational codes are simple and unreliable. The Russians know all this, preferring messengers with packages. Perhaps because of this, and perhaps for a number of other reasons, the Red Army almost completely lacks interaction between various branches of the armed forces.



But the main shortcoming of the Red Army, General Heinrichs continued after a significant pause, lies elsewhere. And he asks his German colleagues to listen carefully to what he has to report to them now.

The Red Army is in dead opposition, so to speak, to the regime existing in Russia. The ego is clear not only from a survey of prisoners of war, the number of which, by the way, exceeded all our expectations. I will take the liberty of asserting, said Heinrichs, that if we had the opportunity to inflict a strong enough blow on the Red Army and seize the initiative in our own hands, and you will agree that if we had the appropriate forces, this could be done at least three times during campaign, the Red Army would simply have fled or surrendered.

Halder looked incredulously at his Finnish colleague. Napoleon repeated that it is not enough just to kill a Russian soldier for him to fall. He still needs to be pushed.

He was talking about a Russian soldier, objected Heinrichs, but the Russian soldier is long gone. There is a Soviet Red Army soldier - a slave without any rights. Consumable cannon fodder. They started a war against us without supplying the troops with even elementary winter uniforms, let alone about nutrition.

The Russian soldier, Halder recalled, was a serf with no more rights than the present one. This soldier was thrown into the Alpine passes barefoot. And yet...

Then a number of issues were discussed with the Finns. In particular, about the possibilities of covert mobilization, constantly emphasizing that all questions are of a purely academic nature within the framework of cooperation between the general staffs.

Hitler was informed about the statements of Heinrichs.

The Fuhrer somehow looked at Halder strangely and said quietly: "He is right. It's a colossus with feet of clay. It will collapse under the first strong blow. It is on this premise that the entire plan for the future campaign in the east must be built.

"I would not build a campaign plan on such problematic premises," Halder countered, risking another outburst of Hitler's anger.

Hitler's thin lips curled into a half smile, half grimace under the brush of his mustache, when he answered Halder with words that the Chief of the General Staff could not forget to the grave:

"We have no choice, General, but to hope that this colossus has feet of clay. Only the blow must be strong. Very strong. Then they will collapse. Otherwise we are finished, dear Halder."

The advance of the British in Africa, the advance of the Greeks in Albania, the constant threat from the east, and, finally, the "garden hose" of Roosevelt - more than enough to stay in the worst mood around the clock. But it turns out that this was not all. The head of German military intelligence, Admiral Canaris, drew the Fuhrer's attention to the fact that the British were constantly withdrawing troops from the metropolitan islands and transporting them to Africa, the Middle East, Crete, Malta and many other places.

Does this mean that they are no longer afraid of our landing?

No, this means that they know that we will soon have no time for landing on their islands, when chaos begins in the Balkans, and our troops will fall under the crushing blow of Stalin's armies.

Those who have eyes see that we are already in a trap from which there are only theoretical ways out. One of them is an attack on the Soviet Union and its defeat in a lightning war.

Is it possible?

This is quite possible, because the Soviet Union is a colossus with feet of clay. It will collapse under our blow and fall apart.

And then it will be possible to adequately meet the British and Americans. But we must act quickly, my Fuhrer, since the possibility of losing the initiative in the war is not at all ruled out.

Several pages about people of German intelligence

Admiral Canaris was considered a favorite of Hitler, who promoted him to admiral and made him head of military intelligence.

No one ever analyzed the wisdom of Hitler's personnel policy and did not pay attention to the fact that in many key posts of the Third Reich there were very strange personality.

Even stranger personalities headed the intelligence services of the Nazi Reich.

In his youth, Wilhelm Canaris, with the rank of lieutenant commander, served on the light cruiser Dresden and participated in the famous raid across the Pacific Ocean of the legendary squadron of Admiral Count Spee.

After a spectacular victory at Coronel, the squadron fell into a trap set by the British near the Falkland Islands and was destroyed. The light cruiser Dresden, thanks to its high speed, managed to temporarily break away from the English pursuit and take refuge in one of the bays of Tierra del Fuego near Cape Horn. The British quickly discovered the Dresden, and before the threat of imminent destruction, the cruiser had to be flooded, and the crew interned in Argentina. This ended the naval career of Canaris and began a new one - reconnaissance and sabotage. During the First World War, Canaris had to work in the United States under the leadership of the famous von Papen, and in Madrid, where, according to rumors, he even was the lover of the legendary Mata Hari, and in many other places where the Kaiser's intelligence made titanic efforts to save from collapse own country.

After the collapse of Kaiser Germany, having taken a sip of the democratic debauchery of the Weimar Republic, Canaris, then a captain of the 1st rank, like many disappointed officers of the Kaiser army, made contact with the Nazis, seeing in them the only force capable of pulling Germany out of the "Weimar quagmire" and once again ensure its status as a great world power. The future policy declared by Hitler seemed to be aimed precisely at this.

The fact that Canaris liked Hitler is not strange. Hitler made a very strong impression on millions of people.

Another thing is strange - that Hitler liked Canaris. The admiral's grandfather was a Greek who came to work in Germany, where he married a German woman and opened a fruit shop. The grandson inherited from his grandfather, along with a prosperous store, curly black

hair, swarthy complexion and small stature, i.e. the very appearance that always brought the Fuhrer into a state close to rage. It was said that Canaris played a certain role in persuading the Field Marshal - President Hindenburg, when the question of appointing Hitler as Chancellor was being decided, forcing the aged warrior to overcome his contempt for a man whose military career had stopped at the badge of a corporal. Canaris was one of the first to bring his congratulations to the future Fuhrer of Germany, and when the touched Hitler asked what reward he wanted for himself, he asked to be appointed head of military intelligence. What Canaris asked Hitler seemed very modest. He even asked again: "The head of military intelligence? Of course, Herr Captain zur See." Soon Canaris was promoted to rear admiral and sat down in the Abwehr headquarters at the corner of Tirpitzufer and Bandler Strasse, trying to cover the whole world with a web of espionage from there.

However, the admiral soon became disillusioned with Hitler even more than with democracy. All regular officers who began serving in the Kaiser's army remained monarchists at heart, which implies not only and not so much loyalty to the emperor, but following certain moral, aesthetic, caste-legal norms. In fact, the constitutional-democratic monarchy of Kaiser Wilhelm II, in which they were all brought up, did not in any way assume (even in a nightmare) the simple Hitlerite methods of solving both domestic and foreign policy tasks. In other words, the Kaiser's former officers turned out to be completely unprepared for totalitarianism, which was as different from a rigidly authoritarian monarchy as day is from night. The most apolitical simply tried to stay away from many of Hitler's activities, which was far from always successful. But this immediately put many in opposition to the regime in the widest range: from telling jokes to open sabotage.

The "Night of the Long Knives", the Nuremberg Laws, political terror, the laws on the press and art, the fires of books and, finally, the famous "Kristallnacht" showed many military professionals the complete futility of the regime, forcing them to fight it already in the name of saving Germany.

By the end of 1939, the German military intelligence Abwehr actually turned into a center for preparing a coup d'état in Germany. Canaris was at the head of the conspiracy, and the soul of the whole thing was his first deputy - the head of the central department of military intelligence and counterintelligence, Colonel (later General) Hans Oster. It all started with a feverish search for the possibility of concluding peace with Western countries during the so-called "strange war". In parallel, desperate attempts were made to disrupt the offensive planned by Hitler on the western front. All materials and documents related to the plan of the upcoming offensive were transmitted to the enemy through established communication channels through the Vatican and Istanbul, and sometimes directly. The unequivocal response of the British that they were not going to talk about peace while Hitler was in power in Germany led to a plot to arrest or kill the Fuhrer. In the Abwehr, a special team was even formed, which, upon receiving the appropriate order, was to carry out the plan. Several major generals were involved in the conspiracy, including Brauchitsch, Halder, and the retired Colonel General Beck. The generals believed that the lightning victory in Poland had raised Hitler's authority among the troops so much that at present the conspiracy had no prospects, since it would not be supported by the army. Some major setback is needed for the plot to coincide with a sharp decline in Hitler's authority in the army and in the country. A sure way to doom any military operation to failure is to reveal the plan of this operation to the enemy, which the Canaris service began to do most of its time, more and more frankly becoming on the path of direct treason. Or, to avoid such a rough wording, becoming more and more involved in the so-called "anti-Hitler resistance movement", which, of course, did not fit in at all with the performance of military intelligence of its direct tasks.

Hans Oster personally collected and sent to London operational information regarding the Norwegian operation, and only the sluggishness of the British prevented Hitler's clumsy landing operation from turning into a complete catastrophe of German weapons.

With no less accuracy and volume, the plan of the German offensive in the west was issued to the Allies in May 1940. In the hope of the impending defeat of the Wehrmacht in the Abwehr, a curious document was prepared with a coup d'état scenario, compiled by Canaris and Oster, which stated:

"At dawn, putschist troops surround the government quarter in Berlin and occupy the most important institutions. All leading figures of the state and the Nazi Party will be arrested and handed over for conviction to special military courts. A state of emergency is immediately proclaimed and a proclamation is published announcing that the "imperial directory" headed by Colonel General Beck has taken over the board. The next step: the dissolution of the Gestapo, the Privy Council and the Ministry of Propaganda. Then the appointment of a date for general elections and the beginning of peace negotiations with the Allied Powers. Cancel dimming. Materials exposing them should be published about the arrested Nazi leaders, and satirists and comedians should be widely used to debunk them in the eyes of the people. At first, the following military units are involved in the coup: the 9th Infantry Regiment in Potsdam, the 3rd Artillery Regiment in Frankfurt an der Oder and the 15th Tank Regiment in Zagan.

The fight against the regime, and especially if this fight takes place in wartime and the enemy of your country is inevitably chosen as an ally, gives rise to a lot of moral problems and a bunch of guilt and inferiority complexes. Canaris understood this perfectly well, since he had to fight not so much with the regime, but with himself, trying so far only for himself to find an excuse for his own actions. Once he confessed to Auster:

"If Hitler wins the war, it will mean the end of us and the end of Germany. If Hitler loses it, then this will be the end of Germany. And even if we succeed in overpowering Hitler, we will thereby cause not only his downfall, but also ours, because no one abroad will trust us anymore.

Nevertheless, both continued their activities, trying to save the country from inevitable death, seeing the only scheme for this: the conclusion of peace with the preliminary removal of Hitler from power. However, the operational plans transmitted to the enemy were of little use. The occupation of Norway was followed by a blitzkrieg in the west, the lightning defeat of the French army and the evacuation of the British expeditionary force from the continent. The authority of Hitler was further strengthened, making the plans of the conspirators unrealizable. But they continued their work, despite the fact that several times they were on the verge of failure.

Hitler, like Stalin, had two practically autonomous intelligence and counterintelligence services. In addition to the military intelligence of Admiral Canaris, there was also a political intelligence and counterintelligence network headed by SS Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, a personality no less strange than Canaris.

Like Canaris, Heydrich began his career in the navy. Born in 1904, he was too young to take part in the First World War, having spent the war years in his hometown of Halle, where he graduated from the gymnasium. Heydrich came from a family of professional musicians. His great-grandfather - a Jew at one time was the first violin in

Viennese operetta, and Reinhard himself enthusiastically indulged in music. Many consider it strange that in 1922 Heydrich entered the navy, but it should be noted that in many countries the offspring of musical families chose a naval career for themselves. There are many such examples in the English, Russian and German fleets ...

After graduating from college, young Heydrich was promoted to lieutenant and appointed communications officer on the cruiser Berlin, one of the few large ships retained by Weimar Germany after the end of the First World War. And there are such fatal coincidences that it was at the very moment when Lieutenant Heydrich received his first officer assignment to the cruiser Berlin that Captain 2nd Rank Canaris took command of the ship. On one ship, fate brought together two of the most sinister and mysterious figures of the future Third Reich, who left behind such a mass of mysteries and

puzzles...

The commander of the ship quite naturally made a great impression on the young officer. His participation in the legendary campaign of Admiral Count Spee's squadron, his romantic intelligence activities during the war years, his undoubted nobility, breadth of views and encyclopedic erudition - all this made Canaris almost an idol in the eyes of Heydrich. This youthful admiration for his commander was preserved by Heydrich and subsequently, preventing the all-powerful head of the Main Imperial Security Directorate (RSHA) from finally cracking down on Admiral Canaris, who embarked on a frank path of fighting the Nazi regime.

Naturally, the attitude of Canaris himself towards Heydrich was different. At the next certification of an officer subordinate to him, Canaris noted Heydrich's abilities in the field of navigation and sports. Heydrich was really fond of the then newfangled pentathlon, showing very good results, especially in fencing.

In the evenings, Heydrich's violin often sounded in the cruiser's wardroom, knocking out tears even from experienced sailors with its sentimental melodies. According to the certification of Canaris, Heydrich was soon promoted to lieutenant, and it seemed that a career as a naval officer was opening up before him.

But something completely unexpected happened. In 1931, Oberleutnant Heydrich appeared before a court of officer honor, which sentenced him to deprivation of his officer rank and dismissal from the ranks of the navy. The reason for such a cruel sentence was Heydrich's love affair with the young wife of one of the senior officers. The case was revealed due to the fact that the officer, violinist and swordsman showed obvious sadistic inclinations in love, bringing the object of his love to the hospital ...

The forced end of Heydrich's officer career and his deep fall, paradoxically, served as the beginning of his dizzying rise. He was then 27 years old, and he was faced with the need to start life anew. Deprived of the means of subsistence, disgraced and declassed, he joined his fate with other personalities like him who emerged from the bottom of the then society, thrown out by painful convulsions of social contradictions. In Kiel, the newly minted lumpen met his old friend from the gymnasium in Halle Eberstein, who led one of the SS teams used by the Nazis to disperse street rallies of their political opponents and other showdowns in the struggle for possession of the street. Eberstein invited Heydrich to join his SS team, to which Heydrich agreed without hesitation. How he at the same time (and later) managed to hide his Jewish ancestor remains a mystery. Apparently, in many institutions of the Third Reich, the principle of Hermann Goering triumphed, saying: "In my headquarters, I myself determine who is a Jew and who is not!"

Just at this time, Heinrich Himmler was organizing the security service inside

SS units, which, in principle, were supposed to find out the plans of Hitler's political opponents.

At first, the new service was conceived by Himmler as purely informational, and therefore, having learned from Eberstein that Heydrich was a former naval communications officer, Himmler, out of his own illiteracy, identified the communications service with the information service in his presentation and called Heydrich to Munich to head this service.

Heydrich was at the right time in the right place, and by the end of 1931, Himmler was promoted to Sturmbannführer (major), and the following year he became a Standartenführer (colonel).

After Hitler came to power, Heydrich was subordinate to the huge apparatus of the Nazi political police, which included the SD, Gestapo, criminal police and many other services, united in the Imperial Main Security Directorate. In 1934, at the age of 30, Heydrich was already a gruppenführer, which corresponded to the rank of lieutenant general, and the services subordinate to him controlled every breath in Germany and rapidly expanded their activities beyond its borders. The famous head of German political intelligence, Walter Schellenberg, who succeeded Heydrich as head of the SD and was subordinate to him for many years, characterized Heydrich as a hidden axis around which the entire Nazi regime revolved. Heydrich rose high above his colleagues and controlled them as well as an extensive network of intelligence and political services of the Third Reich.

Thus, Hitler's coming to power was also marked by a new meeting of old acquaintances: Canaris and Heydrich, one of whom headed military intelligence, and the second - political. Heydrich continued to treat his former commander with great respect. They maintained outwardly the most friendly relations, even with some elements of familiarity characteristic of old acquaintances. Often taking morning rides together, they exchanged information and tried to coax it out of each other.

Heydrich considered such a division of intelligence to be a dangerous heresy, openly and energetically seeking the subordination of the Abwehr to himself. While Canaris, hatching plans for a coup d'état, provided for the elimination of Heydrich (and Himmler, of course) with the reassignment of the intelligence structures of the SS army, i.e. yourself.

In the dynamics of the flaring war, military intelligence was gaining more and more strength, becoming more powerful than Heydrich's service. But if the leadership of the Abwehr in the person of Admiral Canaris and Colonel Oster every year more and more openly worked for the enemy or, to put it mildly, against the regime of their country, then Heydrich's service every year with increasing bitterness was more and more involved in the fight against the Abwehr, rightly suspecting him leadership in cases that simply could not be described otherwise than treason.

The SD and the Gestapo simply hung on the shoulders of military intelligence, trying to track down all its secret agents and control their every move. Heydrich managed to track down and arrest Joseph Müller, who was communicating between the Abwehr, the Vatican and London, and on November 9, 1939, the SD detachment, grossly violating the sovereignty of neutral Holland, captured on its territory agents of the British secret service Best and Stevens, who were in touch with the Abwehr. Considering that the arrest of the British coincided with the famous explosion in the Munich pub immediately after the Führer's departure from there, one can imagine what a commotion began in the Abwehr. Moreover, Heydrich's prohibition to report to the Abwehr on the investigation of this case quickly became clear. Then the SD found out that someone had revealed to the British the plan for the Norwegian campaign, and then the date

offensive on the western front. Traces clearly led to the Abwehr.

Heydrich had long ago launched a whole pack of his agents in Muller's footsteps, including a certain Hermann Keller, a monk of the Benedictine monastery of Beuron. Keller was a double agent: he worked for both the Abwehr and the SD. At the end of 1939, he met in Switzerland with another Abwehr agent, the Berlin lawyer Echait, who, knowing Keller from his work in the Abwehr, told that a conspiracy against Hitler was being prepared in Germany, led by Generals Halder, Weck and Hammerstein. The lawyer also told the monk that Joseph Müller regularly travels to Rome to contact British intelligence. Returning to Germany, he handed over the report, first to the Abwehr, and then to the SD. The largest of Heydrich's subordinates who worked for the Abwehr was the head of the imperial criminal police, SS Gruppenführer Artur Nebe, who by this time had lost faith in National Socialism. He exposed Keller as a double. He also said that Heydrich considered this report so important that he even honored Keller with a personal conversation. Nebe managed to get Keller's report and forward it to the Abwehr. Then Keller, as an agent of the Abwehr, was summoned to Oster's deputy, Major Donany, who "split" the monk and forced him to convey the conversation with Heydrich. At the same time, it turned out that Heydrich considered the arrest of Muller a matter of the next few days.

The situation was saved by Canaris. To Muller's great surprise, the admiral invited him to his place and asked him to write a "fake" memorandum: he found out in the Vatican that "shortly before the war" a military putsch was being prepared in Germany to prevent an armed conflict. Beck Muller should not have been named. But he had to name Fritsch - one of the victims of a very clumsy provocation by Heydrich, who was falsely accused of homosexuality. Fritsch died during the Polish campaign, and he was no longer in danger. Canaris ordered to mention General Reichenau, who had a reputation as an ardent Nazi. Muller tried to object, but Canaris reassured him - he knows what he's doing. Soon Muller was again accepted by the admiral. Muller, who had been waiting from day to day for his arrest, surprised that he was still at large, asked Canaris about the fate of the report dictated to him. Canaris said that he went directly to Hitler and seriously presented him with "the report of a particularly reliable agent in the Vatican." When the Fuhrer came across the name Reichenau, he exclaimed: "Nonsense, I know what's the matter!" and tossed the report aside. Then Canaris went that same evening to Heydrich, who lived next door to him, and with a disappointed look "revealed" to him: "Just think, I thought that I brought the most important news to the Fuhrer. It was a report by my chief agent in the Vatican, Joseph Müller, on the preparation of a military putsch. And the Fuhrer, after reading it, said: 'Nonsense!' and threw it on the floor." However, Heydrich knew much more than Canaris thought. In the absence of Müller, Heydrich's man, knowing the passwords, made contact with the British himself. He managed to transfer the necessary information to the SD, but was killed on the same day in his Berlin apartment. Nor did Canaris know that two officers of the British secret service, Major Stevens and Captain Best, captured by the Gestapo in the Dutch city of Venlo, arrived there using the Abwehr password, which Heydrich's people sniffed out.

By the middle of 1940, it was already quite clear to Heydrich that Canaris was working for both British and American intelligence. However, it is interesting to note that Heydrich collected the material, but not only did not report it to anyone, but did not show it to anyone either. The top-secret Canaris folder was found after the war, but most of the documents it contains have not been released as classified. Why was Heydrich silent? A possible answer to this is given by another folder, discovered much later in Canaris's safe: "Personal file of Chaim Aron Heydrich", extracted from the archives of the Austro-Hungarian police. The documents collected in the "case" identified Chaim Aron with the great-grandfather of the chief of the imperial security service. One can imagine what would have happened to Heydrich, who carried out all the bestial anti-Jewish laws of the Third Reich with his characteristic energy and sadism, personally signed the directive "on the final solution of the Jewish question",

if Canaris showed this folder to Hitler? Heydrich understood this, was silent, but continued to collect material on Canaris, waiting for the moment to strike. As a result, Canaris lost his nerve. He complained to the British. It is said that at the same time the admiral showed the case of Chaim Aron to the Führer. Hitler was shocked, but asked Canaris not to disseminate this information in any case. Soon Heydrich, nominally still the chief of the RSHA, was sent to Prague to the post of protector of Bohemia and Moravia. At the same time, the British, alarmed for the fate of their "super agent", undertook an action unprecedented in the entire war: paratroopers-saboteurs were dropped in the Prague region with the task of killing Heydrich. On May 27, 1942, an assassination attempt was made on Heydrich, who was driving around Prague in an open car without guards. The saboteurs who arrived from England - former officers of the Czechoslovak army, despite the received special training, carried out the operation extremely ineptly. The man who was supposed to shoot Heydrich at point-blank range jammed his machine gun due to the misalignment of the first cartridge, and a grenade thrown into the car hit Heydrich with one fragment that hit the spleen. The Obergruppenführer, who was taken to the hospital, despite a not very serious injury, died of sepsis on the operating table. Everyone who witnessed this assured after the war that Heydrich was killed, but not by Czech saboteurs, but by someone in the hospital. "He was one of the best National Socialists, one of the most staunch champions of the German imperial idea, a threat to all the enemies of our empire," Hitler said at Heydrich's funeral. The Führer said the same thing at the funeral of Rommel, who was forced to take poison under pain of arrest of himself and his entire family.

Although it is now obvious that the British intelligence, which organized the assassination attempt on Heydrich, tried to save Canaris, but this action killed him rather than saved him.

The new head of the RSHA, SS Obergruppenführer Dr. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, never served in the Navy and had no Jewish ancestors, although he came from a family of hereditary Viennese lawyers. Heydrich, I must say, he also did not like and was afraid, but the Abwehr did not like even more. Having sorted out the affairs of his deceased predecessor, Kaltenbrunner found the Canaris folder, which was already eight plump volumes, briefly familiarized himself with its contents, and on April 5, 1943 - less than a year after the death of Heydrich - ordered a search in the safes of Oster and Donaghy. The raid on the Abwehr headquarters was not at all what Canaris, Oster and their associates had imagined for years. Instead of a noisy team of Gestapo men brandishing parablams and rattling handcuffs, two quiet elderly men in civilian clothes arrived. One of them was the Gestapo investigator Sonderräger, and the other was the commissioner of the Imperial Military Court, Raeder. Taking Admiral Canaris as a witness, they walked through the safes of careless scouts who had lost elementary caution after the death of Heydrich. What Sonderräger found was so stunning that Hitler was unable to believe it until the end of his days. It turns out that military intelligence not only transmitted the most important information to the enemy, not only constantly plotted against Hitler (three unsuccessful assassination attempts), but also supplied its own command with disinformation about everything related to the enemy for almost the entire war. As a result, Canaris, Oster, Donaghy and several other leading officers of the Abwehr were arrested and hanged after terrible torture. Kaltenbrunner received the Abwehr into his submission and was himself hanged by the verdict of the Nuremberg Tribunal. Such are the games.

Let's go back, however, a few years ago.

Hitler was furious when the betrayal was reported to him and ordered both the Gestapo and the Abwehr to find the traitor. Canaris did not need to look for a traitor especially, since he was his subordinate Muller, who acted on the orders of the admiral himself. He only scolded Muller for "conspiratorial dilettantism" and promised to hush up the case.

Heydrich looked for the traitor more diligently, gradually unwinding the ball of himself



large-scale betrayal, known in the history of the intelligence of the world.

But there was an area in which Heydrich's service was, to put it mildly, not very competent. Military affairs in all their complexity and versatility did not lend themselves well to the analysis of the Gestapo analysts. The Imperial Headquarters of Security was crammed full of ex-policemen, legal graduates and half-educated lawyers, forensic scientists, idealistic dreamers and sadistic dreamers, chemists developing new explosives for infernal machines and poisons for mass murder, talented doctors and biologists struggling with applied and fantastic military and racial issues, just psychopaths and the public close to them. There were specialists who could determine by handwriting a radio transmission of any intelligence in the world, able to detect fingerprints where it was impossible to leave them, unravel the most complex forensic mysteries, identify a Jew by a lobe

ear, locate any transmitter within seconds, infiltrate anywhere, kidnap anyone and anything. In a word, to carry out any order received from the leadership. But no one knew how to conduct a military-strategic analysis there: neither the former teacher Himmler, nor the former naval lieutenant Heydrich, nor the former lawyer Kaltenbrunner, nor the former policeman Müller, nor the half-educated jurist Schellenberg. And none of their subordinates. Despite the fact that all the listed SS leaders had undoubted talents, none of them understood and could not understand military affairs, because military science is the most complex of sciences, requiring systematic long-term education and vast practical experience. Therefore, if the Gestapo was able to record contacts with the enemy and intercept information sent to London, then it was almost impossible to expose the disinformation "which the Abwehr stuffed the headquarters of the Design Bureau and Hitler himself with the available forces of Heydrich's service. And given that the Chief of the General Staff, Colonel-General Franz Halder himself, was deeply involved in the Abwehr intrigues and in the end was also arrested on charges of treason, miraculously surviving, then only General Jodl remained to expose the disinformation - the head headquarters of the OKW, a very capable and educated general staff officer. At meetings, he often tried to challenge the data presented by Canaris, but the Abwehr information impressed the Fuhrer more than the "cowardly" calculations of General Jodl. As for Keitel, he, as you know, never had his own opinion, but agreed with Hitler's opinion in everything, for which he eventually paid with his head. The headquarters of the High Command of the Wehrmacht (OKW) was also an extremely strange organization, swarming with saboteurs, anti-fascists, spies and talkers; rather resembled the court of the Neapolitan king of the late 18th century, rather than that powerful military structure of the global control of gigantic armed forces, as history presents it to us.

The leak of information that came from the OKW is simply astounding. Suffice it to say that the plan "Barbarossa" within two weeks after its signing became the prey of almost all the intelligence agencies of the world, even those who were completely uninterested in receiving it. One of the first to receive this plan, for example, was Argentine intelligence, which for some time simply did not know what to do with it, and then resold it to the British, who had already received this plan through their channels.

The ease with which German military secrets spread around the world alarmed almost all secret services, forcing them to check and recheck obvious facts, and continues to amaze historians to this day. After the war, the British did not open their intelligence archives for a long time, and when they did, they attributed all the information they knew, obtained during the Second World War, to the merits of the semi-mythical Ultra service, explaining that Ultra was a permanent integrated intelligence operation, including everything from interception of enemy radio communications to messages from illegal agents. The information presented by the British, which they allegedly received through the channels of the Ultra service, was

simply stunning. Whatever the military-political leadership of the Third Reich planned and did, everything immediately became known to the British, and later to the American intelligence, either immediately or after a very short period of time. In addition, the information "Ultra" went to a very great depth. For example, surname lists of all (!) commanders of German submarines, the composition of their families, the names of their mistresses, relationships between families, their weaknesses, hobbies, and so on, were made public. This was not a post-war analysis, but information obtained during the war and actively used. In particular, everyone knew the daily radio broadcasts in German, which Anglo-American intelligence conducted for German submariners on military campaigns, revealing their amazing knowledge. Each broadcast began with a direct appeal to the crew of a particular submarine and to "specific" submariners. They were informed, for example, that someone's family had died under the bombs in Hamburg or had been evacuated somewhere, that some friend or relative of theirs had died of wounds in the hospital. , For example:

"We appeal to you, commander of the submarine "17-507", Lieutenant Commander Blum. It was very reckless of you to leave your wife in Bremen, where your friend Lieutenant Commander Grossberg is currently vacationing. They have already been seen at least three times together in a restaurant, and your neighbor Frau Mogler claims: your children were sent to their mother in Mecklenburg ... ".

Even at the risk of tiring the reader with our extensive footnotes, we will still give a few facts about how information was leaked from the most secret departments of Nazi Germany, because otherwise it is simply impossible to understand much of what happened later in preparation for the implementation of the famous Barbarossa plan. "- a plan of attack on the USSR.

The problem here lies in resolving the question: how could Hitler, knowing about such a disparity of forces, decide to attack? To what extent was Hitler misinformed by his own military intelligence and betrayed by military leaders? How much did they influence the Fuhrer's fatal decisions to crush the Nazi regime?

It turns out that a secret "spy network" of 10 senior officers existed in the very heart of the headquarters of the Supreme Command of the armed forces of the OKW. This network was so conspiratorial that it survived even after the assassination attempt on Hitler in July 1944. Ten senior officers of the OKW rallied against the Nazi regime and hatred of Hitler. Their plot was slowly destroying Germany's entire war effort with the effectiveness of a cancerous tumor. They knew that their activities would inevitably lead to the defeat of Germany, which was their homeland. But they continued their activities until the very end, when Germany was already lying in charred ruins and the last traces of the Nazi monster were destroyed.

Then they parted and never met again. They understood that what they had done excluded them from the German nation, but they were satisfied that they had expelled the demon from the body of the nation. None of them expected glory. The work is important, but there is nothing to be proud of. Moreover, even after the war they could have been killed, find out the former Nazis about their activities. So these officers preferred to remain anonymous. The activity of these people, which was destined to become the most incredible, large-scale and spectacular spy story of the Second World War, began many years before the war, almost immediately after Hitler came to power. We are talking about ten officers, although there were eleven, only because the eleventh, unlike the others, is quite well known. His name is Rudolf Rossler, about whom American intelligence chief Allen Dulles wrote after the war: "Of all

intelligence networks operating during the Second World War, the most admired by professionals is the one that operated from Lucerne in the period 1939-1943. under the direction of Rudolf Rossler (code name "Lucy"). Neither Sorge nor Cicero can be compared with his achievements ... In some way, not elucidated to this day, Rossler, while in Switzerland, received intelligence information on an ongoing basis from the headquarters of the German High Command in Berlin, often less than 24 hours after the adoption of this or that decision ... "It is possible, although it is doubtful, that Dulles really did not know how Rossler received information from the headquarters of the Design Bureau, but at present the whole story, at least in general terms, known enough.

Rudolf Rossler and his ten friends were junior officers of the Kaiser's army who served in the same regiment during the First World War. At the same time, Rossler was considered the spiritual and intellectual leader of this group. The front brotherhood has always been and will be the most durable, so that even after the war they continued to communicate closely, although Rossler himself retired from the army. The remaining 10 officers continued to serve in the Reichswehr, and then in the Wehrmacht. Back in the 1920s and early 1930s, they already had an attitude towards the Nazis in general and towards Hitler in particular. When the latter came to power, Rossler and his fellow officers (five had already become generals) vowed to do everything so that the Nazi regime collapsed. Rossler, equipped with a radio transmitter, was sent to Switzerland, where he opened a small bookstore as a cover.

The beginning of the war found his friends in various posts in the OKW. They were personally involved in making military decisions, and one of them became deputy chief of the OKW communications center. It was from this communication center that information was transmitted to Rossler. Radio operators tapped out various combinations of letters and numbers on the waves indicated by them, never having the slightest idea of either the content of the radiogram, or the cipher used, or the addressee. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the dispatch received by Rossler was also intended for the real addressee in the subordinate structures of the Wehrmacht, so the Gestapo had no way to cover up the source of information. Having received the information, Rossler radioed it to London and Moscow. It was on it that the entire group of Soviet intelligence under the leadership of Shandor Rado fed.

The Gestapo figured out Rossler's radio station quite quickly due to his constant presence on the air. For example, 10 hours after its signing, Rossler sent the text of the Barbarossa plan to Moscow within 18 hours. Finding out that the radio was operating from Swiss territory with the sympathetic intervention of the Swiss security service, and deciphering several radio messages from Rossler, Heydrich flew into a rage, ordering the capture of everyone associated with the operation of this station. It came down to Hitler.

The uniqueness of the situation, when the head of military intelligence and almost all of his deputies worked against their own regime, is another proof of the dead end of totalitarian systems, when many, weighing the degree of their patriotism and love for the motherland on the scales of their own conscience, come to the terrible paradoxical conclusion that the true manifestation of patriotism is treason. The well-known intelligence officer Kim Philby, whom for some reason everyone considers a Soviet intelligence officer, knew about the meetings in Sweden and Switzerland of the chief of British intelligence, Sir Stuart Menzies, with Canaris. After one of these meetings, British intelligence was ordered to prepare the assassination of Heydrich. When Philby proposed to liquidate Canaris at the same time, he received a clear answer from Sir Stewart: "I do not want any action taken against the admiral."

Speaking in 1947 at a hearing in one of the congressional committees, Allen Dulles, who headed American intelligence during the war years and then became the first chief of the CIA, said that the head of the Abwehr, Admiral Canaris, and his main assistants maintained direct contacts with him, constantly passing on important strategic information and even

indicated which objects in Germany should be bombed in the first place. "I worked with several people of Canaris and was directly connected with him," Dulles openly admitted. But not only Canaris and his assistants worked for the enemy. This was done almost without exception by Abwehr residents, both in Germany and in the occupied territories.

A striking example here is Paul Tümmel, an Abwehr resident in Austria, Czechoslovakia and the Balkans. A member of the Nazi Party, awarded a gold badge, Tümmel began to fight against Nazism even before the war, passing information to the Czechoslovakian secret service, Colonel Moravec, and then to the British.

In German-occupied Prague, as if in a minefield, the Abwehr branch in Czechoslovakia, led by Tümmel, settled. It was from the residence of the Abwehr to London that all information about the numerous sharp turns and unexpected zigzags in Hitler's policy was transmitted in advance. Tümmel did not lose contact with Czechoslovak intelligence, which had gone underground. The Gestapo tried in vain to figure out who was providing such complete and reliable information to London. "This is a headache for the Fuhrer and all of us. The agent sat down at the safe with the most important secrets of the Reich ...", Heydrich once said. But the lucky Tümmel continued to act, deftly knocking the Gestapo off the trail and passing information through the channels of the former Czechoslovak intelligence. It is known that the Czechoslovak President Beneš briefed Churchill on Tümmel's message about the "top-secret" Barbarossa plan. The range of his information was unusually wide: events in the Middle East, in Italy, in Spain, North Africa, in the USSR and in many other places. The Gestapo dossier was swollen with materials and developments for "Franta", "Rene", "Eva", as Tümmel was called in ciphers from London. The action proceeded according to the canons of the most action-packed action movie: with ambushes, skirmishes, chases. Tümmel's messengers perished, and the ring around him closed. However, it was possible to arrest him only after the defeat of the Abwehr headquarters in Berlin. On April 27, 1945, Colonel Paul Tümmel was shot. We have diverted the attention of readers for so long with these details in order to show that Hitler's formula, or rather the dream, expressed in the slogan "One people, one Reich, one Fuhrer!", Was very far from being realized. More can be said: this formula was just as fantastic as the Soviet one about the unity of the party and the people. Such romantic and emotional natures, like Adolf Hitler, who are able to inspire the masses with their most extraordinary ideas, are the first to fall under the hypnosis of their own suggestion and break away from reality, which is mortally dangerous even for an ordinary person, not to mention the head of state.

Stunned by the cries of "Heil Hitler!" Hitler realized late that it was by no means the whole nation that was shouting, but a smaller part of it. While the rest, being in varying degrees of opposition to the regime - from outright treason, like Admiral Canaris, who created an absurd situation when one branch of state intelligence spent all its time fighting the other, to the famous Professor Heisenberg, who saw a direct path to atomic weapons, but who did not want to follow it, having taken the entire German atomic program into the impenetrable jungle of experiments torn off from theory, they did everything possible so that this regime did not last more than 12 years.

Stalin (meaning pre-war Stalin) was much more practical than Hitler. Cries of "Long live the great Stalin!" least of all stunned himself. He did not believe, like Hitler, in anyone's loyalty.

"You won't live long on love," the leader of all peoples used to say, "but on

you can live forever in fear. And, as always, he was absolutely right. The opposition to Stalin was something completely different from the opposition to Hitler - in essence, but in form it was completely identical. However, if Admiral Canaris held the post